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# PREDESTINATION AND FREEWILL

AND THE

WESTMINSTER CONFESSTION OF FAITH:

WITH EXPLANATION OF ROMANS IX.

AND APPENDIX ON CHRIST'S PREACHING TO

'THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.'

BY

JOHN FORBES, D.D., LLD.,

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## P R E F A C E.

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IT is in the hope of relieving the tender consciences of those who fear, by giving their signature to the *Westminster Confession*, they commit themselves to the obnoxious doctrines charged against Calvinism, that these pages are issued in their present form. That much misapprehension generally prevails, as to the real doctrine contained in this Standard of the Presbyterian Churches, is evident from the unsparing denunciations so frequent of late against the Confession of Faith, as binding its subscribers to opinions which they no longer believe, and by the charge brought against it in an article in the *English Church Quarterly*, reputed to be from the pen of Mr. Gladstone, "that the *Westminster Confession* disposes of men by *irrespective decrees*".\* It is to be feared that this misapprehension deters many of the most conscientious Christian-minded men from the ministry and eldership. A painful case of this sort forms the immediate occasion of my attention being again drawn to this question. Indeed the essay itself was the result of serious misgivings which long troubled my own mind, that the *Westminster Confession* rendered it impossible to hold, what Scripture so plainly teaches, the boundless and impartial love, to every one of His creatures without reserve, of the great Father of all—"who will have *all men* to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4), and is "not willing that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9)—and that it limited salvation to a few arbitrarily elected and predestined by Him.† For a time, indeed, I quieted

\* *Church Quarterly*, 2nd July, 1876.—Review of *Memoir of Rev. Norman McLeod, D.D.*

† This is the interpretation explicitly put upon the Confession by the younger Dr. (A. A.) Hodge of America, and supported by the prevailing erroneous inter-

my conscience with the idea that Scripture itself fully bore out the conclusions of Calvin, and expressly taught the same doctrine in Rom. ix. 11-18 : "The children being not yet *born*, neither having *done any good or evil*," that the purpose of God according to election might stand, . . . it was said : Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." Verse 14 seemed to justify the apparent "unrighteousness" of this procedure, by claiming for God in ver. 15 and 18 the right to show ~~mercy~~ to whom He willed, and whom He willed to harden—*without regard to anything distinctive in themselves*, which occasioned the difference of treatment. But when, in my study of the Epistle to the Romans, I came to see how utterly misunderstood this passage has been by all the commentators, I set myself to examine the Confession of Faith, whether I could conscientiously continue my adherence to it. The conclusion, I may state briefly, at which I arrived was that the Confession, if it does not present so fully as one could desire some sides of the truth, yet contains nothing which (like some of Calvin's statements) *contradicts any essential truth, nor prevents those who have subscribed it from fully declaring and teaching the whole truth.* The work altogether is a wonderful production, as containing a most complete and carefully digested summary of all that had been reasoned and thought out on the great questions of religious thought up to the time of its composition ; and has justly been pronounced to be a most valuable guide and corrective to the Christian student, as furnishing a standard of religious doctrine and truth, in regard to which those who know it best will cautiously abstain from adding to, or subtracting

pretation of Romans ix., in his "Commentary on the Confession of Faith," republished in this country by T. Nelson & Sons. The very repulsive character which this view assigns to God's offers of salvation made to those not included in the decree of Election, is exposed in page 44. "Reprobation (according to Dr. Hodge, p. 75), is absolutely sovereign, resting upon God's good pleasure alone ; since *those passed over are no worse than those elected.*" This is the very essence of arbitrariness and partiality, to make a distinction in *judgment*, where there is no difference in the parties themselves. See page 44.

from, its statements, till after the fullest deliberation and examination of them on all sides.

It was impossible, however, to stop short with the examination of the Confession of Faith. The difficulties which it suggested led to the investigation of all the cognate questions involved. The essay accordingly, though taking the form mainly of a defence of the *Westminster Confession*, will be found to embrace questions universally interesting to all inquiring minds, whatever their church or creed. Who is there, of those whose minds have been seriously exercised in the search after Christian truth, who has not desired more light on such perplexing questions as these : —*If all things are foreordained of God, where is there place for Freewill in man? If Regeneration be the work of God alone, as being a new creation, where is man's part in his conversion and salvation? If God elects, how can man be called upon to choose between good and evil? Did Christ die for all men, or only for the elect? Is the Atonement limited or unlimited?*

To these and similar questions an attempt has been made to reply in the following essay, and to draw the correct lines of demarcation between the conflicting and seemingly contradictory opinions which have been so keenly argued on both sides. The defect in almost every discussion one has seen of such questions is that the representation of the opposing views leaves them in such a state as to appear to involve logical contradiction; and the inquirer is quietly told he must accept both without any attempt to reconcile them.

If the perusal of these pages shall prove of service to any in removing their conscientious scruples, or in enabling them to see more clearly the consistency of scriptural truths, so as to be able to give an intelligent reply to those who ask for a reason of the faith that is in them, my object in the publication will be attained.



## PREDESTINATION AND FREEWILL.

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THE difficulty of reconciling the antagonistic truths of Predestination and Freewill has exercised the minds of men from an early period. The danger is of stating the one truth, or rather the inferences thought to be deducible from it, in terms so extreme as virtually to exclude the other; either of so magnifying God's Predestination as to destroy man's freewill and responsibility, or of so magnifying man's freewill as to make God dependent on His creature, and man to be the author of his own salvation.

Before entering on this much vexed question, let it be premised that the difficulties connected with predestination can with no fairness be charged specially to Revelation, as any presumption against it, since they equally affect all religions and all philosophies; and in selecting the Westminster Confession of Faith as an exponent of the doctrine, all who are acquainted with the strong statements of that document on the subject will allow that, if these are shown to be consistent both with sound reason and with Scripture, and with God's perfections as well as with man's responsibility, the difficulties of the question have been fairly met.

The following observations are offered not in the vain expectation of solving the *intrinsic* difficulties necessarily connected with mysteries far transcending the grasp of our finite minds, but in the humble hope of clearing away some of the *factitious* difficulties which human speculations have superadded; and more particularly for the purpose of pointing out the palpable distinction, which has been so generally overlooked, between

predestination to good, and foreordination to evil; between election as originating with God, and reprobation as originating with the creature; and thence deducing the consequences which flow from this important distinction.

The distinction itself is manifestly implied in the following carefully weighed statement of the Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. iii. 1. (1) "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass; yet (2), so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." Here both sides of the question seem to receive their due weight. (1) God's free predestination is strongly asserted, and yet (2) man's freewill duly maintained. *All* things are declared to be ordained from eternity by God, good or bad, yet with this most important distinction, that while God is the *author*, that is, the *originating* cause of all that is good, He is not "the author of sin," that is, the originating cause of the evil in the hearts of His creatures.

But if God is not "the author of sin," the creature must be its author. God has delegated to man\* a portion of His own power, however small, yet sufficient to constitute him an independent agent by giving him a will which can *originate* an act opposed to God's will. Sin is the breaking off of the creature's will from God's will. But God's will cannot oppose His own will; it must therefore be the self-willed and self-originated act of the creature. God is the source of all good, and of good only. Hence we deduce the universal principle—

All good originates from God.

All evil originates from the creature.

If this principle be kept steadily in view, it will dissipate much

\* Satan, it may be objected, originated sin. True; and this proves our proposition that not God, but the creature, is the author of sin. But in the case of the first commencement of man's sin, the temptation indeed originated with Satan, but the yielding to that temptation was the act of man's own freewill. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of *his own* lust, and enticed."—James i. 14.

of the error and difficulty that have gathered around the subjects of our inquiry.

Predestination is thus divested of its most objectionable aspect. All things are predestinated by God, both good and evil, but not *prenecessitated*, that is, *causally* preordained by Him, unless we would make God "the author of sin". Predestination is thus an indifferent word, in as far as the *originating* author of anything is concerned,\* God being the originator of good, but the creature of evil. Predestination, therefore, means that God included in His plan of the world every act of every creature, good or bad. Having decreed to create freewill beings, that is, creatures having the power of breaking off, or not breaking off, that state of creaturely dependence of their wills on His holy will, and of

\* Predestination, as *generally* understood, includes both good and evil. The distinction (afterwards adverted to) made by the authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and of the Authorised Version, between Predestination and Foreordination, by confining the former to the foreordination of the Elect only, while Foreordination includes evil as well as good, has not been generally observed; otherwise it might perhaps have prevented the neglect of the important distinction on which we insist.

That the error should so generally have passed current of attributing a *causal* import to predestination, in defiance of the principle admitted by all, that God, although He predestinates everything, is yet not "the author of sin," need not excite so much surprise when we reflect on the inveteracy with which an error of a somewhat similar nature in grammar still retains its place—of denominating the participle of *continuing* or *imperfect* action, "writing," "scribens," " $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\omega\nu$ ," a *present* participle, notwithstanding the palpable inconsistency of applying such a term to the expressions, "He *was* writing," "he *shall be* writing." "He *is* writing" is indeed *present*, but in the former of the other two instances, "writing" is *past*, and in the latter *future*—proving that the imperfect participle "writing" implies in itself no time, but expresses only the *continuance* of the action of the verb, and which is present, past, or future, according to the verb with which it is connected.

The origin of the error in this case seems to be that in using the participle "writing," we more frequently conceive of ourselves as being *present* at the act when going on. So in predestination the more frequent conception regards the foreordination of the *Elect* to salvation, and because with it is also combined (though a perfectly distinct question) a direct *causal* influence of God, which originates, carries on, and perfects the work of salvation in the *Elect*, the idea has been improperly extended to the predestination of the reprobate, as if some *causal* influence were exerted by God in His decreeing or permissively preordinating their foreseen perseverance in sin and consequent condemnation.

union to Himself in which He had formed them, and knowing what each in the exercise of his freewill would choose, even though it were the evil, He included it in His plan, and to this extent foreordained it, overruling it to subserve His own wise and holy purposes. If in one sense, therefore, He may be considered as the first cause of all, yet is He but the *permissive*, not the *causative* or *originating* author of sin.

To make this distinction clearer, let it be observed that no act *in itself* is sinful—that is, no *outward* act, as distinguished from an act of volition. The character of every act depends on the disposition or motives from which it proceeds. The same act may be good or bad according to the intention of the agent. Every act of every creature in truth is in so far executed by God. He it is that lends the power, that nerves the hand, that upholds the will. “In Him we live and move and have our being,” and we cannot do a single act, good or bad, without Him. Every act of the creature therefore is, in a certain sense, also an act of God—even the most wicked; namely, in as far as He permits it, and gives the power for its performance. But it is wicked only in as far as man’s will and intention are concerned; on the part of God it is good, being permitted only as made to issue in the wisest and best ends. Thus the most heinous exhibition of man’s depravity ever perpetrated, the crucifixion of our Lord, was on the part of God the highest manifestation of His love and goodness ever made to the universe, and *as such* was permitted and predestinated by Him.\*

\* There need therefore be no difficulty in conceiving the distinction between God’s *permissively*, and *causally* predestinating an action. If God, as all allow, can *permit* an act of sin in His creatures, of which, as being originated by them, He is not the causal, but only the permissive author; it cannot be hard to conceive that such an act has been only permissively, not causally *foreordained* by Him.

The *certainty* of the fulfilment of all God’s purposes ought to be carefully distinguished from their *necessity*—that is, from any supposed causal influence on the part of God as requisite in all cases to ensure their certainty. It is an unwarrantable limitation of God’s foreknowledge to deny that he can with *certainty* foresee what he leaves dependent on the freewill of His creatures, and can adjust it so as to work out infallibly His own prearranged purposes. The Westminster Confession of Faith stands entirely free from this fundamental error, into which

God's free predestination and man's freewill both met in one and the same act. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of *God*, *ye have taken*, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," Acts ii. 23.

Man, therefore, in as far as his volition and intention are concerned, is an *originating* cause or author. He originated sin at first; he originates the resistance to the strivings of God's Spirit that would rescue him from sin and renew his nature. He has the awful power given to him to resist to the uttermost and quench God's Spirit, and to reject the counsels of God against his own soul; and God cannot withdraw this power without undoing His own work and destroying man's free agency and responsibility.

Election and Reprobation will thus be seen not to be exact contraries, but to differ in one essential respect.

Election originates in the free grace of God.

Reprobation originates in the freewill of man.

To God belongs the whole glory of the salvation of the Elect.

To man belongs the whole responsibility of the ruin of the Reprobate.

Thus is the main point for which the Calvinist is so zealous fully vindicated, viz., that the whole glory of man's salvation from first to last is wholly attributable to God's "mere free grace and love," and not to anything foreseen in the creature "moving Him thereunto":\*

But so far is the opposite of this from being true, as has been too hastily assumed, viz., that the doom of the reprobate is in like manner owing merely to the sovereignty of God, and not to anything special foreseen in the creature "moving Him thereunto," that the very reverse is the case. It is with the creature that the evil originates; it is with the creature that persistence

both Calvin and Jonathan Edwards have fallen. See ch. v. 2. "Although in relation to the foreknowledge and degree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet, by the same providence, He ordered them to fall out according to the nature of second causes either necessarily, *freely*, or *contingently*." The authors of the Confession evidently saw no inconsistency between the foreordination of God and the freewill of His creatures.

\* Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. iii. 5.

in it rests, not with God ; and to the continued resistance, foreseen by God and foreordained by Him *permissively* and not *excusatively*, of the obstinately impenitent to all the strivings of God's Spirit with them, it is to be ascribed that God decrees "to pass them by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for *their sin*, to the praise of His glorious *justice*." \*

This most important distinction as to the origination of good and evil, and its recognition in God's decrees, are frequently indicated in Scripture. Thus, in speaking of the "vessels of wrath" and the "vessels of mercy" in Rom. ix. 22, 23, there is a most marked distinction made by St. Paul. Of the former he uses the passive participle "fitted to destruction," *κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν*; while of the latter, the "vessels of mercy," the active voice of the verb is used, and the preparation is directly attributed to God as the originating author, by the words, "which *He had afore prepared unto glory*," *ἀ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν*. We have a very striking instance in Matt. xxv. 34, 41 in the distinction made by our Saviour between the sentence which He will pass at the last day on those on His right hand, and that on those on His left. To the former the address is, "Come, ye blessed;" to the latter, "Depart, ye cursed;" but how significant the addition to the former, "Come, ye blessed of *My Father*," contrasted with its omission to the latter!—not "Depart, ye cursed of *My Father*," but simply, "Depart from me, ye cursed,"—to remind His hearers that while the blessing upon the one was all of God, the curse upon the other was solely of themselves. Not less significant is the departure from strict parallelism in the remainder of the verdict, "Inherit the kingdom prepared *for you* from the foundation of the world," contrasted with, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared *for the devil and his angels*." In the case of the saved, the kingdom is stated expressly to have been designed for them: "Inherit [as the intended heirs] the kingdom prepared *for you*," but in the case of the lost, "the everlasting fire" is said to be "prepared" not for *you*, but "*for the devil and his angels*." In the former case the blessing proceeds from a predestinating

\* Westminster Confession of Faith, chap. iii. 7.

purpose "according to the good pleasure of His will" formed "before the foundation of the world," marking God's gracious design in the creation of His responsible creatures; in the latter the reprobate are represented as rendering themselves amenable to a punishment not prepared for them, but for the malignant enemies of God and man.

And so generally throughout Scripture, wherever the opposite dooms of the righteous and the wicked are mentioned, we usually find the former ascribed to God, the latter to men themselves: thus, "The wicked shall go away into eternal *punishment* [due as that which they have *earned* for themselves], but the righteous into eternal [not *reward*—which would have been the proper antithesis to "punishment"—but] *life*," Matt. xxv. 46. "The *wages* of sin is death; but [not the *wages*, but] the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23.

Even when it is stated that a *wicked* act of man had been foreordained, as in Acts ii. 22, that it was "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" that Jesus was "delivered" up to death, still God's counsel respects not so much man's act by which it was brought about, as God's gracious purpose of redemption, which He overruled man's criminal crucifixion of Christ to work out; and so far from God's foreordination of this event being represented as exerting any *causal* influence over the Jews to lead them to the perpetration of this fearful iniquity, St. Peter charges the full responsibility of it on the Jews, as being the guilty authors: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*"

We find the Election of believers, but never the Reprobation of the unbeliever, referred to the εὐδοκία, "*good pleasure*" of God's will, Eph. i. 5, 9; Phil. ii. 13; 2 Thess. i. 11; and so in the Shorter Catechism, Quest. 20, "God having, out of His *mere good pleasure* [in the corresponding Quest. 30 of the Larger Catechism, "of His *mere love and mercy*"] elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace," &c. Election is a *spontaneous* act of God's own benevolence, uncalled for by anything in the creature "*moving Him thereunto.*" Reprobation

is a *judicial* act of God, *forced* upon Him by the hard-hearted obstinacy of the impenitent "moving him thereunto." The authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith (chap. iii. 3, 4, 5, 8, x. 1), of the Larger Catechism (Quest. 12, 13), and of the Shorter (Quest. 7), have evidently felt and hinted at this distinction, by their restricting the term *Predestination* to designate God's counsels with regard to the elect alone, while *foreordination* is the word employed to include all, the wicked as well as the righteous. We may add the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible—compare Rom. viii. 29, 30, and Eph. i. 5, 11, with Acts. iv. 28, in which last passage the rendering is "determined beforehand," although the Greek verb is the same, *προορίζειν*, which is used in all the other passages. The highly Calvinistic Synod of Dort repudiates and "detests with its whole heart" the opinion that "in the same manner as Election is the source and cause of faith and good works, Reprobation is the cause of unbelief and ungodliness" (Acta Synod. Dordrechtanae, p. 275). Peter Dumoulin, in a paper which he read before the Synod, says, "If God has predestinated the Elect to faith, it does not follow that he has predestinated the Reprobate to unbelief. In the order of things, impenitence precedes reprobation; but faith is subsequent to election, as being one of its effects." *Ibid.*, p. 294.

The distinction to which attention has been drawn will, I believe, if followed out to its legitimate consequences, furnish a satisfactory reply to all the objections usually urged against the views of Predestination and Election set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which has been the object of frequent animadversions of late, as if no longer tenable amidst the enlightenment of the present age.

And in order to limit the field of our remarks on this extensive subject, let us confine our attention to the case of those to whom Christ is proposed for acceptance. The question as to the final state of Heathens and of those who have not had the means of knowing the gospel is one of useless and unauthorised speculation, being among those "secret things that belong unto

the Lord our God." All that it behoves us to know with regard to these is, that, as Christians, we are bound to use every means to extend the knowledge of Christ's salvation to all, and to preach the gospel so far as it is in our power to every creature. But with regard to those whom the knowledge of the truth has never reached, and who, as the Confession of Faith states, "are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word," (chap. x. 3), it were presumptuous in us to exclude them from salvation, and to limit the influences of the Holy "Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth."\* (Ibid.) All such we may safely leave to the uncovenanted mercies of God, assured that "the Judge of all the earth will do right," and that each will finally be judged, not according to that which he had not, but according to that which he had.

Limiting, then, our consideration to Christian countries, and to those to whom the gospel offer is known, let us advert to some of the objections generally urged against the doctrine laid down in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

I. It is said, *The view given of Election limits the highest attribute of God, LOVE. It represents Him as confining His grace and salvation to a favoured few, while He denies them to others. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call, by His word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ,*" &c. (Chap. x. 1.)

Now, in the first place, if we believe that salvation is *in fact* limited to a certain number, and that there are some who shall be eternally lost, no sound objection can be brought against the fulness of God's love from the mere circumstance that what takes place in time should have formed part of the purposes and predestinating decrees from all eternity of that God with whom

\* If a sweeping sentence of condemnation is passed upon all Gentiles on the ground that Scripture has distinctly said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16), are those who thus argue prepared to include in the same sentence all children that die in infancy, as being born in sin, and incapable of believing?

there is no time, but all, past, present, and future, forms one eternal now. On this point we cannot do better than quote the following excellent remarks of Professor Crawford :—"The purposes of God are but His actions in prior intention ; and His actions are but His purposes in actual accomplishment. . . . Now, inasmuch as it is fully believed by all Christians that God's actual procedure—though to our minds it be often mysterious—is wise and just and good and holy, they needs must ascribe the same characteristics to His eternal purposes, by which that actual procedure, and nothing else, was predetermined. They cannot consistently regard it as objectionable that God should have previously resolved to do those self-same things in which, when He actually does them, they believe that there is nothing objectionable."\*

Again, "men are exceedingly apt, when speaking or hearing of 'the decrees of God,' to attach to them the idea of *express commands* or *peremptory enactments*, by which the will of some uncontrollable sovereign is authoritatively declared and rigidly enforced, or otherwise to ascribe to them some direct and potent influence in bringing to pass the events to which they relate. This, however, is altogether a misconception. The decrees of God are merely His purposes. He alone, except when they are prophetically announced, is cognisant of them ; and He alone, if we may so speak, is influenced by them. They are God's secret designs for the regulation of His own procedure. *But they are not rules or laws prescribed for the guidance of others; still less are they powers or agencies exerted for the coercion of others.* Considered in themselves, they are confined to God alone ; and they must first have had effect given to them in His actual doings—in other words, they must have ceased to be mere purposes, by being carried out and embodied in action—before any other being in the universe can be influenced by them. It is a gross error, therefore, to speak of the purposes of God as *exercising a compulsory influence on His creatures.* For, in fact, it is not by His purposes at all, but only by His actual procedure,

\* "The Fatherhood of God," by Thomas J. Crawford, D.D., Professor of Divinity in the University of Edinburgh. Appendix, p. 424. 2d Edition.

that any influence, whether compulsory or otherwise, can be exerted upon us."\*

We ought therefore to put away entirely from our view the priority to their actual execution of God's purposes of Election or Reprobation, as most liable to lead to false conceptions and inferences, and to acquiesce in the conclusion that whatever is right for God to do must be equally right for Him to decree; and that His decrees exert no control over man's free will, since we cannot for a moment suppose that God omitted to include in His decrees whatever is necessary for the free exercise of the responsibility of the creatures whom He was about to bring into existence.

Still it will be urged—"This does not touch the real objection. In His *actual procedure* God is represented as showing mercy to some which he refuses to others in exactly similar circumstances, all being sinners. In Scripture God is represented as 'good to all; and His tender mercies, as over all His works,' (Psalm cxlv. 9). He 'will have all men to be saved,' (1 Tim. ii. 4), and is 'not willing that any sinner should perish,' (2 Pet. iii. 9). But according to the Calvinistic view, He is represented as singling out as He pleases some of the objects of His love, and passing by others without giving them equal chance with the favoured few. *He could, if He chose, save all, and yet will not save all.*"

Now, here—in this last proposition, which is incautiously conceded by the defenders of the Confession, as if it were an incontrovertible axiom—lies the great fundamental error, which it is most necessary in the present time to expose. Any theory, it must be acknowledged, stands self-condemned that limits any of God's perfections, except (and this is in reality no exception or limitation) in what would involve a self-contradiction. Now, here it is that we find the solution of the apparent difficulty, in the fallacy passing unobserved of the assertion that God "*could, if He chose, save all,*" and not seeing that it involves a self-contradiction. Few seem to have realized to themselves what the

\* Crawford on the "Fatherhood of God". Appendix, p. 427.

true nature of free will is, or wherein the real difficulty of the problem consists, of the reconciliation of predestination and God's agency with man's free will and responsibility. They seem to think that God has but to will it, and the hearts of all would be instantly changed. If this were correct, why does He not change all? and where were the need for all the complex and wonderful combination of moral means and motives displayed in the scheme of redemption, to accomplish what a word could effect?

It has been forgotten what is involved in the very creation of a freewill being. It is the endowment of a creature with a power that may form a volition contrary to God's holy will, and may by its own free act break off from its normal condition of creaturely dependence on God's will, and resist obstinately and finally, if it so determines, every effort of God for its recovery and reunion with Him; since by the very terms and essential character of a *freewill being*, God precludes Himself from putting forth His mere power to effect a change, unless He would undo His own work, and be chargeable with self-contradiction. God has thus, so to speak, limited His own power. But in truth there is no real limitation either of His omnipotence or sovereignty. It detracts not from His omnipotence to say that He cannot do and undo a thing at the same time; that He cannot both give and withdraw a power at the same moment. It is no infringement on His sovereignty if it is He Himself that thus limits Himself, unless we will maintain that in everything God creates and endows with certain properties His sovereignty is infringed, since in creating a lion He precludes Himself from making it an eagle, so long as it continues to be a lion.

In this sense there are many things that God cannot do, since nothing can be done that is inconsistent with the previous arrangements that He has made. Else, where were the scope for God's wisdom in devising those beautiful adjustments and adaptations,\* which call forth the admiration of every observant

\* As, for instance, in that most wonderful instance of mechanism and contrivance, "the wing of a bird". See some striking observations on this subject in the Duke of Argyll's "Reign of Law," pp. 128, ff. "Nothing is more certain

mind in both the natural and moral worlds ? It is to be feared that the profound wisdom of God exerted in the production of the marvellous harmony which pervades all His arrangements is not sufficiently appreciated, from the vague idea being entertained by many that God has but to will anything whatever, however inconsistent or contradictory, and it will immediately be done. But God cannot, for instance, make two and two to be five, black to be white, two angles of a triangle to be less than the third angle, air to be lighter, yet heavier, than water, or falsehood to be truth, injustice to be justice, or wrong right; nor alter any of those essential relations which subsist between the things that He has created, *without altering the things themselves*. In the moral world, He could not, having passed His word, "In the day thou doest that which I have forbidden thee, thou shalt surely die," simply set aside His truth, and pardon the sinner at once upon his mere repentance. Death must follow, if God's word is to be kept inviolate and the sanctions of His holy law maintained—death, endured first by man's great Representative, who alone by His perfect holiness could pass through the ordeal undestroyed; and then, secondly, by virtue of the full atonement and power thus procured for man, by the believer himself voluntarily giving up his present forfeited life, and submitting to the death of the old man, that he may receive in the new man a new and spiritual life, thoroughly purged from every defilement and unholy tendency. It taxed (if we may so speak with all reverence) the highest resources of infinite wisdom to devise that marvellous scheme, into which angels themselves desire to look, by which the seemingly conflicting claims of "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psalm lxxxv. 10.

But even when all difficulty on the part of *God* had been removed, and the way was opened for His mercy being extended to the penitent sinner in full accordance with the demands of His justice and truth, another obstacle, scarcely less formidable, than that the whole order of nature is one vast system of Contrivance. And what is Contrivance but that kind of arrangement by which the *unchangeable* demands of law are met and satisfied ?" p. 129.

on the part of *man*, remained to be overcome, arising from the freedom of choice with which God had endowed him, before the proffered salvation could be made available to fallen man. This difficulty has been entirely overlooked by those who hold that, now that Christ has satisfied God's law, God has but to put forth His Spirit, and all, as many as it is His good pleasure, will be immediately converted and saved. If this were correct, why, we must again ask, are not all without exception saved? Christ's death, it will be allowed by all, was a sufficient "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," (1 John ii. 2). Is it, then, by *God Himself* that the atonement made by His blessed Son is limited? and the sacrifice of Jesus shorn of much of its glory by the mere *arbitrary* exclusion of so many lost souls from its provisions? Can we with any propriety suppose that for any less reason than the sheer impossibility and necessity of the case, and the self-contradiction involved in the opposite result, Satan is permitted to mar God's work and destroy so many souls who might have formed additional gems in the Redeemer's crown? "God," we are told in the most express terms, 1 Tim. ii. 4, "will have *all men* to be saved," and he who wills the *end* must, if sincere, will the means also, so far as they are dependent on himself. Again and again, with the most solemn asseverations, God assures us, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," Ezek. xxxiii. 11; xviii. 23, 32. We cannot see how it is possible to reconcile these declarations with God's truth, if a single soul be lost that He could by possibility save. God is "not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9. A simple wish of His, it is supposed, could save them, and yet He will not put it forth, though a St. Paul would have sacrificed himself to have procured the salvation of his brethren according to the flesh!

On such a view no satisfactory Theodicy, or vindication of the divine government, can ever be based. But admit, that involved in the very creation of responsible agents is the inalienable power of resisting God's holy will, and continuing obstinately in that resistance in spite of every means used for their recovery, and all our most formidable difficulties vanish. We remove

from God, and attribute wholly to the creature, the origin of evil—the limitation of the atonement—the ruin of lost souls—and the fearful doom of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” which they bring upon themselves. We preserve intact all God’s perfections, and dissipate the dark cloud which rested on the sincerity of His professed desires and offers for the salvation of *all*, and on what He claims as the highest glory of His name and nature, the boundlessness of His mercy and love.

We sadly detract from the grandeur and wisdom displayed in the marvellous scheme of redemption by overlooking the true nature and arduousness of the great task which God had to accomplish. The mighty problem of the universe which the Gospel professes to solve is this : “Given a race of responsible creatures whom God has endowed with free will, and with the awful power of breaking off their wills from His holy will, and who have abused this power to rebel against Him : how is He, in perfect consistency with the nature which He has bestowed, and retaining to them their unconstrained freedom of choice, to induce them, while their minds are still in their natural state of aversion to holiness, to consent to God’s renewing their hearts and reversing the corrupted bias of their wills, so that they shall renounce all that they have hitherto so dearly loved ?” Only, it seems evident, by convincing them on the one hand of the misery and danger in which they are involved—and on the other hand, by awakening in them a confidence of His willingness and power to save them, and to apply an effectual remedy to their disorder, if they will only yield themselves to Him to treat their case as He sees fit; only by Himself putting forth such a mighty power of love, combined with righteous wrath against sin, as has been exhibited in the sacrifice and death of His own Son on the cross, to convince them of the destructive nature of sin, and of the sincerity and depth of His love and anxiety for their salvation, and of the efficacy of the remedy provided ; so that the sinner is led at last to see the extent of his misery and ruin, and to trust to the mercy which seeks his recovery, and thus yields himself at length to the treatment of

the great Physician, rather than persevere in what manifestly must so soon prove irremediable destruction.

The mighty power of God put forth in the gospel of His Son and the wonder of His redeeming influences consist in this, that while He leaves unimpaired the free-will of His creatures, yet in complete consistency with this freedom—by the overpowering motives brought to bear upon the sinner in the exceeding riches of the gospel of His Son, by the sweet and winning influences of His wondrous grace, and by the application of the grand truths of redemption to our minds by the Holy Spirit—He bends the stubborn heart, subdues its rebellion, melts down its hardness, and draws it to Himself with the cords of love to yield itself to be changed, renewed, and sanctified by His Holy Spirit.

It is a *moral*, not a miraculous, power which God puts forth in inducing sinners to consent to their spiritual cure, and to the rectification by His *miraculous* power of the perverted bias of their will, and the regeneration of their depraved nature. God's miraculous power, like His physical, cannot be resisted. His moral power can, and alas! is resisted every day. It is an alarming truth, the force of which we ought to be most cautious in weakening, that by the very nature of our constitution as free-will beings God has given to us the awful power that we may resist, if obstinately so inclined, the utmost striving of His Spirit with our spirit, and bring upon ourselves that state of spiritual insensibility and hardness which is called in scripture, "the sin against the Holy Ghost," "which cannot be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come," (Matt. xii. 31, 32)—because no higher manifestation of God's righteousness and love, than that already made in Christ, remains behind to awaken and influence the deadened soul to repentance. The scripture is full of the most solemn warnings to us that we may "resist" (Acts vii. 51), we may "grieve" (Eph. iv. 30), we may "quench" (1 Thess. v. 19), we may "do despite to" (Heb. x. 29) the Spirit of God. We may "reject the counsel of God against our own souls" (Luke vii. 30). With every one God's Spirit is striving from the first

moment of moral consciousness to recover him, or more correctly to induce him to give his consent to his recovery, from that state of corruption in which all are involved. This is what Christ has procured for every individual of Adam's race by His great work of redemption. Without Christ we cannot think a good thought, nor make one movement towards conversion. His Spirit it is that awakens the soul sunk in the lethargy of sin. His power must bring forth the captive from the bondage of iniquity ; His grace must incline the stubborn will, and supply to us the power to perform. He must "work in us both to will and to do" (Phil. ii. 13). Yet the sinner may refuse to be awakened and close his eyes wilfully against the light vouchsafed ; he may harden his heart in obstinate impenitence and unbelief ; he may do despite unto the utmost strivings of God's Spirit. He may refuse to work along with God. God will not constrain the will, for this were to destroy the very nature of the responsible creature He has made, and to deny to him all probation. If man is, as I suppose all will allow, in a state of probation here, that probation must consist in something that depends on man's will, not God's, to do or not to do, to choose or to reject, to yield up or to keep back. Little as it is that man has in his power, yet God leaves that little to every individual that is sufficient to prove him, and which he may, if he is obstinately headstrong, withhold.

We thus avoid the dilemma, from which otherwise there seemed no escape, of limiting one or other of God's attributes. If all are not saved, this must arise either from a want of *will* on the part of God, or from a want of *power* necessitated by the circumstances of the case. Strange to say, the former of these alternatives has been that generally adopted. The highest of God's attributes, LOVE, has been, without any plea alleged of constraining necessity or self-contradiction, circumscribed in its universal extension to all. If God can save all, and yet will not save all, it is impossible to maintain that His love is unbounded and impartial. We contradict at the same time by such a supposition the most express and unambiguous declarations of Scripture—"God is not willing

that *any* should perish" (2 Peter iii. 9). "He *will* have *all men* to be saved" (1 Tim. ii. 4). "God is the Saviour of *all* men, specially of those that believe" (1 Tim. iv. 10). Grant the possibility of saving all, and it is impossible to maintain the infinitude of His love and to stop short of His bringing about by some means finally the *universal* salvation of *all* His creatures.

But it will be said that we land ourselves thus in equal difficulty in limiting the omnipotence of God. God is willing to save all, and yet *cannot*. The reply to this objection has already been given. God's omnipotence is not really limited, by the impossibility of reconciling direct contradictions. By the very circumstances of the case God has, by the creation and maintenance of a free will in the responsible creature, precluded Himself from putting forth His mere power to constrain a change, and it forms no real limitation to His power that He cannot contradict Himself and stultify His own work. This limitation (if such it can be called) to His power, His own word has pointed out, "What *could* have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it?" (Isa. v. 4); Jesus "*could* there do no mighty work . . . because of their unbelief" (Mark vi. 5, 6). But nowhere do we read of any limit, but what the hard-heartedness of men themselves assigns, to the lovingkindness and tender mercies of the universal Father, who "will have all men to be saved." "For God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.)

Let not therefore the impenitent unbeliever so abuse the doctrines of predestination and electing grace, as to attribute his own obstinate impenitence to any want of love and mercy on God's part to him. The fault lies wholly with himself—he is his own undoer. God's Spirit strives with every man till by his repeated acts of resistance he at length destroys all susceptibility in himself of being renewed. In no case, we firmly believe, even that of the greatest sinners, has aught been omitted by God which He knew could possibly avail for their

amendment.\* None shall be able in the last day to plead, "Thou art a hard taskmaster, reaping where Thou hast not sown," and demanding repentance and conversion where Thou didst not furnish sufficient means and motives, or withheldst arbitrarily the grace necessary for conversion. Who can doubt the sincerity of Jesus' desire and the zealousness of His efforts to save His countrymen, which yet their own perverse will frustrated? "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt. xxiii. 37.) Take the case even of Judas. Dare we question the sincerity of the Saviour's desires and exertions to soften the heart of His infatuated disciple, or presume to think that anything that wisdom could devise, or benevolence dictate, was omitted by Him to avert his awful doom? Even

\* To the suggestion which so readily rises to our minds, that the possession of greater advantages and stronger evidences would in many cases have led to sincere repentance, and yet has been withheld, the words of the Saviour are a sufficient answer, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). If it be replied, as is frequently done, that Jesus Himself supposes such a case, "If the mighty works which were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (Matt. xi. 21), we deny the legitimacy of the implied inference, that He meant by these words to denote a *lasting* and *effectual* repentance. Jesus is here impressing on His countrymen the greatness of their guilt by contrasting it with that of others, as elsewhere He says, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; because they repented at the preaching of Jonas" (Matt. xii. 41), without implying that the repentance of the Ninevites was anything more than temporary. How short-lived it was we learn from the subsequent denunciations of the prophet Nahum against that city. Ahab, we read, humbled himself before the Lord when he heard from Elijah the evil that was to come upon him and his house, and "rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his flesh and fasted, and lay in sackcloth and went softly" (1 Kings xxi. 27), so that the Lord in consequence delayed the execution of His vengeance till his son's days. Yet no one, we presume, ever supposed these words to imply that Ahab's repentance was a thorough and "godly repentance unto life, not to be repented of," or that they were meant to reverse the deliberate verdict passed by the sacred writer on the review of Ahab's whole life and character. "There was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord—whom Jezebel his wife stirred up" (1 Kings xxi. 25).

to the very last He intermitted not His efforts but made a final touching appeal—which we should have thought the hardest heart could not have withstood, now that he was aware that his designs were known to his Master—by dipping the sop of intimate friendship in the dish, according to Eastern custom, and presenting it to him with its well understood import, “What! thou, my familiar friend, whom I have admitted to the closest intimacy, lift up thy heel against Me?” But Judas was of the number of those whom (if we will accept the simple meaning of Scripture language), in consequence of their persevering abuse of the means of grace, “it is *impossible* to renew unto repentance” (Heb. vi. 4-6).\*

\* The reconciliation here offered of God’s attributes in His judicial dealings with His moral creatures does not foreclose the interesting question started by Mr. Jukes,<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cox,<sup>2</sup> Canon Farrar,<sup>3</sup> and others, which at present is attracting so much attention. On this mysterious subject of the Eternity of Punishment, no more definite conclusion, we believe, can be reached, than the reply given many years ago, by one of the best and most Christian men I have ever known, to another eminent clergyman who is still alive, when giving utterance to the awful feeling inspired by the thought, of so many souls being consigned to “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” :—“ You will remember, my dear Sir, no words could have been more express than those addressed to Adam before his fall, ‘ In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die’ : yet God found a remedy”.

In the examination of this question, the following points seem worthy of attention :—

1. God did not announce *beforehand* to Adam, that He would find a remedy.
2. The *non-natural* meaning forced upon *aiώνιος* is unnecessary, if the elasticity of meaning in adjectives according to the substantives they qualify is kept in mind. The duration of the *present* time varies exceedingly according as it is joined with (the present) *instant—hour—day—year—century—world*, &c. *Aiώνιος*, *eternal*, expands to its utmost, (being without beginning or end), when applied to God (Isaiah xl. 28, Genesis xxi. 33, Rom. xvi. 26); but contracts proportionately when applied to “*eternal life*” in the creatures—which has a beginning—“covenant of an everlasting *priesthood*,” i.e., so long as the Mosaic dispensation lasted—“*everlasting hills*,” so long as the earth endures—“*everlasting punishment*,” so long as its cause, sin, endures, &c. But still in every case (whatever higher idea may be associated with it) it denotes eternal or everlasting *in duration*, its derivation from *aiών*, an age, no more proving the contrary than the derivation of *eternus* (i.e., *ævi-ternus*) from *ævum*, an age, proves that it does not mean *eternal*.

1 “The Second Death and Restitution of All Things,” by Rev. Andrew Jukes.

2 “Salvator Mundi,” by Rev. Samuel Cox. 3 “Eternal Hope,” by Rev. Canon Farrar.

II. A second objection which is urged against the doctrine of the Confession of Faith is that *it destroys all probation and responsibility of man in receiving and rejecting the gospel.* In Scripture man is ever represented and addressed as being under probation, and called upon to choose life or death. "Believe and be saved: believe not and thou shalt be damned." But the Confession represents man as being "*altogether passive in regeneration*" (chap. x. 2), and "*not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto*" (chap. ix. 3), and affirms that those "*not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved*" (chap. x. 4). Thus, in reality, mankind have no probation, neither the elect nor the non-elect. The elect can make no movement of themselves, till God's predestinated time arrives; and when the Spirit begins to operate upon them, His operation is irresistible. The non-elect are equally passive. Born in sin and in a state of mortal impotency, they can take no step whatever for their deliverance from their hopeless condition, because the Spirit's indispensable aid is by God's predestinating decree refused to them. Man's responsibility is thus wholly at an end. If all is God's work, and man's nothing; if man is necessitated to follow God's leading, or to remain inactive, as the case may be, the whole responsibility plainly rests with God, of evil as well as of good.

3. From Christ's words (Mat. xxv. 46), "*and these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal,*" it has been argued that - to question the endlessness of punishment is to invalidate the argument for the endlessness of bliss, since the word in the original applied to both is the same. Here it has been forgotten that while a sovereign cannot draw back from his promises, it is his prerogative to make "*mercy rejoice over judgment*".

4. The objection started is *speculative*, as regarding the ultimate fate of the many unrepentant—not *practical*, as regarding our own duty and obligations. God's terms are clear and unmistakeable. Our present life decides our future fate, for "*it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment*" (Heb. ix. 27). What God may possibly have in reserve in an after dispensation or *æon*, for those who have forfeited the pre-eminent place offered them in the present dispensation, of being "*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, being made kings and priests unto our God and Father,*" and exalted to "*sit with Christ in His throne*"—we may with confidence leave with Him who is infinitely wise, loving, and powerful, to determine.

*Man is degraded to a mere puppet, the strings of which are pulled from without, and which possesses no living power of its own, but which must move exactly as it is moved, according to a secret decree by God of election or reprobation. If the representation of the Confession of Faith destroys every claim to merit on the part of the elect, it is at the expense of destroying equally all responsibility and demerit on the part of the impenitent in not complying with the offers of redemption.*

In reply to this objection we would say, Most truly does the Confession of Faith pronounce man to be "*altogether passive in regeneration.*" And does not Scripture, we would ask, does not reason affirm the same? Scripture represents fallen man as being "by nature *dead* in trespasses and sins," and his conversion as being equivalent to a "*new birth*," a "*new creation*." This birth, this creation, reason tells us, must be wholly God's work. If the very change consists in leading the will to choose and love holiness and God, instead of sin and self to which it had become inseparably wedded by habit, how can the will change its own fixed bias, and will against will? If the very cure to be effected is the removal of the *moral inability* of the will for good and holiness, the unconverted sinner must be equally powerless to make any movement towards holiness, as the impotent man to restore power to his own limbs.

But where then, you ask, is there any place for man's agency to come in? Evidently man's place must be *previous* to regeneration. The blind, or impotent man, cured by our Lord, was utterly incapable of restoring sight to his blind eyes or strength to his paralysed limbs. This was Christ's work alone. But he could cry, "Thou son of David, have mercy upon me." He could feel the misery and helplessness of his sad condition (though for the consciousness of this in the case of the spiritually blind the sinner must have been indebted to the teaching of the Holy Spirit), and could see from all that he had heard and learned of Christ that He was able and willing to heal him; and he must acknowledge this and apply to the Saviour, other-

wise the great boon would never be granted. The demand of Jesus ever was, "Believest thou that I can do this?" and "He could not," and would not, in consistency with the great lesson that all His external miracles were intended to teach, "there do any mighty work" (Mark vi. 5) where he found a perverse "unbelief." The *moral* inability of the will, which man has contracted through sin, does not involve its *natural* inability. Though the glory of Bartimeus' cure was wholly Christ's, in which the blind man neither had nor could claim any share, yet he could and must persevere in his cry to Jesus, notwithstanding the rebuke of the multitude, and when called, cast away his garment and hasten to Him, otherwise his cure would never have been effected. When Christ said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," so far from furnishing to him an excuse for remaining in listless inactivity till it should please God to regenerate him, He laid the responsibility upon him of his own regeneration, and of taking those steps on condition of which alone this blessing would be granted him. The husbandman has not the slightest power to make the seed sprout, or, to make a blade of corn to grow, yet he must do his part by preparing the soil, and trust to God's goodness to prosper his endeavours; and although in common language he may be said to have raised the crop that has sprung up, yet, if he is a humble and devout man, he will attribute the whole produce and praise to God alone.

In accepting the salvation offered to him by Christ, there is no demand made upon the unregenerate man which the *natural* freedom of will still remaining to him, notwithstanding the fall, is unable to fulfil. When the Spirit of God, who is striving with every man (at least till he becomes utterly hardened and reprobate), has brought the sinner to see the fatal nature of his malady, with the certainty of death impending over him, and the infinite power and mercy of the gracious Physician who offers to heal him, it is but an act of selfish prudence, a choosing of life instead of certain death, a "loving of those that love you," of which even "sinners" are capable (Luke vi. 32), if the sinner at length in despair places

himself in the hands of the great Physician to do with him as He will, and consents to take the medicine, however unpalatable, which is necessary for his cure. There is no merit nor moral goodness in his at length yielding himself up to God's rescuing hand, unless we will contend that the debauchee, whom his benevolent physician has, after long-despised warnings, at last persuaded of the fatal consequences of persisting longer in his gross self-indulgence, shows the least moral goodness in yielding himself at length to the treatment of one, who has given the most convincing proofs of his power to cure his disease, and his anxious wish still to save him. There would indeed be greater unreasonableness in the infatuated wretch who would none of the physician's counsels, recklessly preferring a short-lived pleasure to life, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die" (1 Cor. xv. 32); but this gives not the slightest claim for merit to him who submits himself to the regimen necessary for a successful cure. In like manner, there is an aggravation of guilt and folly on the part of the man who perseveres in refusing all God's and Christ's gracious offers, and a *negative* superiority therefore on the part of him who yields himself at length to be cured of his malady—to this extent, that he *ceases to be* his own undoer. Whereas the man who continues obstinately to resist the strivings of God's Spirit *is* his own undoer. The act is *solely his own*, not God's. But if I on the contrary yield at length so as not to be my own undoer, do I therefore claim to be my own saviour? If overcome at last by my fears, and by the invitations and blessed influences of God's Holy Spirit, who has so long striven in vain with my heart, I differ to this *negative* extent from the obdurate rebel, have I thereby acquired any merit or ground of boasting? If I justly confess myself to be utterly unworthy, and cast myself on the free grace of God, and on the merits and power of Christ for my change and recovery, do I by that act prefer a claim to superiority above others? If for every thought that has ever crossed my mind of giving up my rebellion, I acknowledge myself indebted to the suggestion of God's Spirit, do I thereby set myself above others? No,

surely. The very act of faith in Christ presupposes and implies an utter renouncing of all faith in myself, or dependence on any thing that I can think or do, as having good or merit in it. It is an acknowledgment that in me dwelleth only evil, and that all good proceeds alone from God. The greater demerit of another imparts no merit to me.

There seems, however, to be a prevalent misapprehension on this subject against which we must guard, as if in attributing greater demerit to the unbeliever for his rejection of the Saviour, some claim for merit would thereby be established for the believer, if any self-determined act of his be required as the condition of his conversion. An important distinction has here been neglected. Merit and demerit (just as election and reprobation) have been placed upon an exactly equal, though opposite footing. Because all are equal in as far as merit, or rather *no merit* is concerned, it has been inadvertently concluded that all are equal as to demerit. It has been forgotten that "some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others,"\* and that "there is a sin unto death," (1 John v. 16). So far as merit is concerned, all are equal, so that, all being sinners, none has the slightest claim on God's mercy. Justice would equally condemn all, the debtor that owes fifty, as well as him that owes five hundred pence. Those, therefore, whom God saves are chosen "out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance, in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto".† But it has been too hastily assumed that there is no difference on the other side "moving Him" to the reprobation of the non-elect. It is forgotten that while *all good originates with God, all evil originates with the creature*, and that there may be such persevering obstinacy shown by the latter, as will yield to no motions of God's Holy Spirit, but may resist the counsel of God to the uttermost; that while there is no merit, and therefore no degrees in merit,

\* Westminster Shorter Catechism, question 83.

† Confession of Faith, ch. iii. 5.

there are degrees in demerit. While in the case of two mutinous seamen—who, having long resisted every effort on the part of their captain to reform them, have at last, through their continued intemperance, fallen overboard, and are on the point of being swallowed up by the waves of a stormy ocean—one grasps the rope thrown out by his master's mercy, and is saved, while the other rejects it, or depends on his own efforts to save himself, and is drowned ; has the former ground to boast that he is his own saviour ? There was assuredly more mad wilfulness and obstinacy in his hardened companion who refused to accept the proffered aid, and to yield himself at length to the necessary discipline of the ship ; but the recklessness of the latter imparts no merit to the former. While the one can ascribe his deliverance to nothing *in himself* “*moving*” his captain “*thereunto*,” but solely to his master's compassion, the other had equal mercy shown to him, but his destruction was entirely his own doing. When the prodigal son returned to his father and was received with such overflowing love, of which he confessed himself utterly unworthy, would the sense of the entire freeness of his father's goodness, and of his own absolute demerit, have been at all diminished, by learning that another of his father's sons, who had run the same course of riot as himself, refused to cast himself into those arms by which he himself had been so warmly welcomed ? Would the greater obduracy and infatuated perverseness of his brother, extenuate, in the pardoned brother's eyes, his own guilt, or lead him less to ascribe his own forgiveness to *free unmerited grace* ?

This prepares us for the right solution of that question, “Who maketh thee to differ from another ?” From looking principally to the one side (that of the elect), and seeing the plain answer that must be returned, it has been assumed without due reflection, that the same must be the reply with regard to the other (the reprobate), and hence the charge of injustice and partiality that has been preferred against the doctrine, that attributes regeneration wholly to God as his special work, in which man is “altogether passive.” If God alone makes one to differ from another, then is He the author equally of reprobation, as of

election. But the answer to the question, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" must be the very reverse when addressed to the one class, from what it is when addressed to the other. If the question is put to the elect, the unhesitating reply will be, "God's free grace alone hath made me differ from others, and the undeserved mercy of Him who arrested me when utterly destitute of any righteousness of my own, and plucked me out of a wicked world, though no better than others, but ready, if left to myself, to have run the same career of wickedness as the most abandoned sinner." To the same question, the answer of the reprobate (whatever *at present* the deceitfulness of the human heart may suggest), in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, must be, "My own perversely obstinate will alone caused my ruin, which resisted the unceasing efforts of God's Spirit to soften me, and quenched every influence of His grace, offered equally, and pressed upon me as on others."

I cannot, however, though at the risk of tiring the reader's patience, leave this subject without drawing attention to some other distinctions necessary to prevent misapprehension. The power attributed to the natural man in p. 23, of giving up his resistance to God's Spirit, and, when alarmed by the consequences of sin and allured by the offers of deliverance, at length yielding himself reluctantly to the great Physician, must not be confounded with the willing and delighted surrender of himself to Christ, as the Saviour from *sin*, which the regenerate man is enabled to make the moment that, on his consent being given to his cure, God opens his heart and changes it from the love of self and sin to the love of God and holiness. Man's part and God's part ought here to be strictly distinguished. The sinner must not be allowed to think that he has nothing to do for his conversion; yet the whole glory of the cure and mighty change effected must be ascribed to God. The sinner's consent, however, must first be given before the cure is wrought, since herein consists our very probation. The moment the consent is given—the blind eye is opened, the deaf ear unstopped, and a new life and world burst upon the enraptured sense.

The heavy burden of sin is removed from off the heart of the believer ; he feels himself a new man ; and love to God and Christ fills his soul and constrains him to willing and heartfelt self-surrender.

I am aware how difficult it is to conceive aright, much more to express one's self with the requisite caution and correctness, in attempting to draw the line of demarcation between the agency of God and that of His responsible creatures, where both must contribute their part to the result. It is hard to define where God's part ends, and the little part left to man begins ; and the present is but a humble and imperfect attempt to indicate in what direction at least the point of reconciliation between the two is to be sought, and to show that the electing and predisposing grace of God, and the free will and responsibility of man, are not contradictory or mutually exclusive of each other. I have made the attempt only because I know the exceeding pain caused to many sensitive minds by the *apparent* harshness and inequality of God's dealings with part of His responsible creatures, when it was supposed that by an absolute decree He had predetermined the life, conduct, and eternal fate of all according to His mere arbitrary pleasure ; because I have known in others the paralysing influence, continued for years, of the fixed idea that they could do nothing, absolutely nothing, to hasten or promote their own amendment and regeneration, but must wait for God to move them ; and, above all, because I feel strongly that it is equally necessary, while casting down every self-exalting claim on the part of the believer, to remove from the unbeliever every excuse for his impenitence and carelessness, grounded on the plea that he can do nothing to forward or retard his own salvation, since all is God's gift, and everything is irrevocably fixed and predetermined independently of him. It is most important to disabuse the minds of heedless and impenitent sinners of every such pretext, and to impress them with a deep conviction that the responsibility is theirs, and that though they can do nothing for their deliverance without God, still there is a somewhat left to themselves to prove them—something which,

as natural men, they can do or forbear, and which if they neglect, they, and not God, are their own undoers.

Everywhere in Scripture the sinner is called upon to *repent* and *believe*. Neither of these can he do without God. Repentance and faith both are called *gifts* of God, *saving graces* vouchsafed by His Spirit. Still, since it is the *natural man* that is called upon to repent and believe, it is beyond question implied that there is a something connected with these acts, which he can and must do in order that God may do the rest, and which is *dependent on his will* in its present unregenerate state to contribute. He may *refuse* to repent and believe; he may *withdraw*, therefore, his refusal of these gifts which God is pressing upon him. This leads us to see that besides the divine element in faith and repentance, there must be a human element also in them, which the sinner has to supply. Of these two elements we can trace some of the distinguishing features.

*"Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience."*\* A *true* sense of his sin, *as sin*, only the spiritual man can have; but the natural man can have a sense of the misery and ruin of it, and either banish this consciousness when it recurs, or cherish and deepen it. *Grieve for sin aright*, as being a dishonour to God, he cannot, nor *hate* it, since he still loves self-indulgence, and hates righteousness and self-denial; but he can feel "*grief and hatred*" for the *consequences* it will entail upon him, and let his mind dwell on these, so as to make him desire at length deliverance from them.

Again, that saving "*faith*, whereby we receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation as he is offered to us in the gospel,"† is a spiritual grace for which the believer must be indebted wholly to God. But there is much in preparation for this, that the natural man can do in the way of learning and believing in the work and power of Christ to save. Even "*devils*" can "*believe and tremble*" (James ii. 19); and by the powers of un-

\* Shorter Catechism ques. 87.

† Shorter Catechism, ques. 86.

regenerate nature we can make ourselves acquainted with all that Jesus has done and taught and suffered on our account, and can see and appreciate its adaptation to our wants as fallen creatures, nay, have the conviction and *faith*, that if we would only submit ourselves to the great Physician, He is both "able and willing to save to the uttermost." All this is evident from the case of preachers who have descanted eloquently on these topics and have yet been themselves unregenerate men. The conviction of our malady, and the assurance of the saving virtue that resides in Christ, we can either deepen by frequent reading and reflection, and thus prepare the soil for the reception of the truth, or we can treat these convictions with indifference or neglect. The unregenerate man can be just and upright and benevolent in all his dealings, seek after truth, and practise many of the moral virtues.\* The cultivation of these good qualities tends to render a man more susceptible of the great spiritual change, and seems to constitute what our Saviour calls the "good and honest heart" (Luke viii. 15), and the being "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34); while the indulgence of the opposite evil qualities debases and hardens the heart, and deadens its susceptibility.

Nevertheless, for this susceptibility, and for all the preliminary steps by which the mind of the natural man has been gradually brought to the state in which he is prepared to yield—and this is the point to which I now desire to direct particular attention, and which, it is hoped, will remove any lurking objection still

\* Still, so long as the unregenerate man stops short of yielding up his will to God's will, his acts cannot please Him, no more than the acts of rebels, however justly and kindly they act to each other, can please their sovereign, so long as they refuse to submit themselves to him, nor "make them meet to receive grace from him". This is the meaning of the statement in the Confession, Ch. XVI., VII., at which offence has been often taken, "Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end—the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God". God's word requires that *every act* shall be done as "unto the Lord," and no work of him who still continues to resist His will can, religiously considered, be good in God's sight.

felt to the statement in p. 23—for all this state of preparedness, I say, the sinner is indebted to the gift and grace of God. From earliest youth God's Spirit is striving with every one. Without this, which is a part of Christ's purchase for the recovery of a ruined world, we cannot see how fallen man, if he had been left wholly to himself without God's restraining grace, would not have become wholly and incurably reprobate at once like the devils. But for *all* Christ has procured a reprieve, and the opportunity and means of probation and recovery. To all is given *common grace* to restrain, and rouse, and prepare. This must not be confounded with *special grace*, but carefully distinguished from it.

*Special grace* is that by which a man is converted, regenerated, born again, made a new creature. *Common grace* is that which is common to all, of which all men, even the unregenerate, are partakers. Even of that generation which was the most corrupt that ever lived, the generation before the flood, when "all flesh had corrupted its way before God," the Lord says that His Spirit strove with them, though there was a limit to His patience and forbearance, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Gen. vi. 3); and the ground of condemnation to every unbeliever at the last will be that he has resisted God's Spirit to the uttermost. Nothing but the restraining grace of God checks the overflowings of iniquity which otherwise would quickly overwhelm the earth. The testimony of Scripture is that man by his fall is clean gone from righteousness; that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually" \* (Gen. vi. 5). "In me," says St. Paul, Rom. vii. 18, "that is my flesh [in his *carnal* nature, were it left to itself without the Spirit procured by Christ] dwelleth no good thing." Every better thought that stirs within us, every desire after amendment is derived from God's Spirit. Man

\* Not that the sinner has no good thoughts or desires after what is right or which suggest better things, else were he already as the devils, but that even for these he is indebted to what Christ has done in restraining the natural course of sin, and procuring for man a new trial; and that in every conflict between God's will and his own self-will in the unregenerate man, the *final choice* is "only evil continually."

"by nature" is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 1-3), as insensible of himself to everything spiritual as the drowned man is to this world; and as it is only by the efforts of others that the drowned man is awakened to sensibility, so it is through the influence of the Spirit purchased by Christ, that the dead soul is awakened to any sense of spiritual things. This process of awakening is carried on in both cases to successive stages, often much against the will of the patient; for I have been informed by one that had been drowned, that so painful were his feelings on the first dawning of sensibility, that if he could have spoken he would have entreated those who were endeavouring to resuscitate him to let him die in peace; and we know from many instances that equally painful and opposed to natural desires are the first awakenings to spiritual life. Here, then, it seems to be, at this early stage, that man's awful responsibility in fixing his own eternal doom occurs. While yet he is the subject of these motions of common grace, he may at length be brought to yield consent to the oft-repeated strivings of God's Spirit to arouse him; or he may—such is the fearful power involved in freewill—resist the utmost strivings of the divine Spirit with his spirit; he may grieve, he may quench, he may do despite unto the Spirit of God. He may reject the counsel of God against his own soul.

But if he proceed not to this awful length, still *common grace* is not sufficient for his regeneration. *Special grace* is absolutely necessary—a grace of which he must have been brought to feel the indispensable need, and for which, in all converted men, we believe at some period of their awakening, when the soul has been aroused to a full sense of its desperate depravity and utter helplessness, a cry of indescribable anguish and longing (like St. Paul's, "O wretched man that I am!") rises up from the depths of the soul unto Him who can alone rescue it from everlasting ruin.

This is a truth on which our Lord often and urgently insists. By the powerful influence of common grace Nicodemus had been awakened so far as to overcome his strong Pharisaical prejudices and to come to Jesus by night. But our Lord warns him that

he could not become His disciple, nay, that he could not *see* the kingdom of God even, unless he should "be born again." This birth was as impossible for Nicodemus to effect for himself as for a child to forward his own birth, or for a blind man to open his own eyes. Still he must feel the necessity of this new birth for himself, of this new sense of vision being given to him ; and though he could do nothing positive for their attainment, he could yet believe in the Lord's power to bestow them ; he could cry, Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.

Now whence is it that the natural man is to gain even this preliminary knowledge and conviction of his own darkness and need, that are to lead him to come to Jesus for help ? It must, our Lord tells us, be "*given*" to him by God. It is by the previous teaching and training of "the Father" that he can be prepared to seek or to listen to Christ. This is the great truth again and again insisted upon by our Lord in John vi., especially in the words of verse 37, "All that *the Father giveth me* shall come to me," the principal bearing of which has not been duly apprehended by commentators. Their aspect to our Lord Himself they have indeed pointed out, as consoling Himself for the unbelief of His hearers by the assurance that His labours could not be in vain since all God's chosen ones must infallibly come to Him ; but they have failed to appreciate their aspect towards those whom He was addressing, and the impression which He designed them to make on them, as showing them the source of their unbelief and its only cure. Yet that this was their principal design will be seen by looking to the words with which He sums up the whole discourse in ver. 65 ; where again He assigns the cause of their unbelief and its only cure, in terms almost equivalent to those in the verse under consideration. There, as here, He had just charged them with their unbelief (ver. 64), "But there are some of you that believe not" ; compare ver. 36, "But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not." There (ver. 65), He immediately assigns its cause and points to where alone they can find its cure, "Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father," which is very nearly the

same as here (ver. 37), "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." The unbelief in both cases is connected with *the Father's not giving*, in the one case, *not giving unto them to come to Jesus*; in the other, *in His not giving them to Jesus*; for the remedy, they must look to the Father to give them—or to them—else they can never come to the Saviour. This truth again he reiterates in different words in verse 44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him."

Jesus, by these words, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," cannot mean to furnish them with an excuse for their unbelief, as if the cause of it lay not in themselves but in the predestinating purpose of His Father who had not given them unto Him; but, on the contrary, His object must be to show them that its true cause lay in themselves, in their want of that humbled mind that has come to see its own sinfulness, ignorance, and insufficiency, and that its only help is in God; as he says to them in chapter viii. 46, 47, "Why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Ye must first listen to God in that preparatory teaching which He has given you, and to His Spirit striving with you, before you can receive me. This is the truth which Jesus is pressing on the Jews in the whole context of this, and the preceding and succeeding chapters, "I said unto you that ye also have seen me, and believe not" (vi. 36), that is, ye have seen me manifesting in all my works and words, the power, wisdom, and other perfections of God, but ye believe me not as revealing to you God, because, alas! ye have no sense for the Divine. "Ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles," and the presence of God in them, "but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled" (vi. 26). So long as ye look merely to outward things, and have no eye nor ear for that which is Divine, you will see in me but a mere man, poor and despised. As your fathers did of old, so do ye. Though they heard "the voice of God speaking to them out of the midst of the fire" (Deut. iv. 33), and had so long beheld His *shape* in the form of the pillar of cloud and fire that manifested His presence in the desert, still Moses had to

expostulate with them, " Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day," (Deut. xxix. 4). So now, though God's *voice* bore witness to me at my baptism, and His Spirit was seen descending on me in the shape of a dove, and my words and my works are continually revealing His will; and power, and presence, I have to expostulate alike with you, " Ye have neither heard His *voice* at any time, nor seen His *shape*, and ye have not His word abiding in you" (John v. 37, 38)—otherwise ye would have recognised the Divine in me. But if all that the Father has done before in His preparatory teaching to awaken you has passed unheeded by you, how can ye listen to me? " Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (V. 46, 47).

Recognise, then, the source of all your unbelief in the darkness and obduracy of your carnal minds, and acknowledge your insufficiency and need of Divine teaching and aid. Ye cannot give yourselves unto me; the Father alone can give you unto me. " No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." " It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father [and such only] cometh unto me." Pray, therefore, unto Him, that He would *give*, that He would *draw*, that He would *teach* you. If you would have God's *special* grace to qualify you for the higher blessings of His kingdom, see that His *common* grace be allowed to effect its preparatory work on your souls.

There is thus, we see, a previous teaching and training here ascribed to the Father, necessary to the natural man before he can come to Christ, and which must first be received and improved by him. He must be brought to know that he is sick before he will apply to the Physician. He must acknowledge that He is a sinner, before He will seek unto Him, who " came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." God's *law* must first accomplish its work in him, in convincing him of the evil of *sin*, and his own inability to do God's will, or to effect his own salvation, before he will appreciate Christ's *gospel*. And

here, in this preliminary stage, is the place for man's responsibility as regards his conversion; and on his improvement or neglect of the opportunities then afforded, the righteous rule will find its application, " Whosoever hath [and hath improved], to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath." (Mat. xiii. 12).

From the beginning to the end, then, all is of grace; for every better thought that stirs within us, for the very first conception of any life higher than the temporal, and for every desire and aspiration after it, we are indebted to God's Spirit; and when, through the preparatory means employed by God, His Spirit has at length called forth these desires with such distinctness in the soul as to render it responsible and justly condemnable for their rejection, or to lead to further desire for some change, then comes on, we conceive, that critical trial, decisive of our doom, whether we will stifle every conviction that has been awakened in us of our danger, and of the destruction which we are preparing for ourselves by impenitence, or will yield at length to Christ, that He may save us from certain ruin by changing and renewing our hearts, and restoring us again to the image of God.

Let me close with an illustration, which may perhaps, better than all reasoning, make clear the point which I have been endeavouring to establish. Take the case of an habitual drunkard. When the reflection has been brought more intensely home to his mind of the injury already done to his health, character, and prospects, by his wretched habit, and of the certain ruin that he is speedily preparing for himself, we can suppose him, in one of his lucid moments, yielding himself at length to a skilful physician, who, he is convinced, has devised a perfect remedy for his disease; and this, while no love for sobriety, as regarded in itself, is as yet awakened in his mind, but the ruling propensity still continues unbroken. The craving for his unhallowed indulgence may continue as strong as ever, and he yet be induced to beseech the physician, " Save me from myself." His consent to submit himself to the regimen of

the physician (for which change of mind, however, he may have been much indebted to the physician's urgent warnings and exhortations) is an act indispensable on the part of the drunkard for his cure: yet the whole honour and merit of the cure itself are attributable to the physician.

III. It is objected that *God's election and man's election (or choice) are incompatible. If God chooses out of the objects of His favour according to His own good pleasure, and "passes by" all others, men cannot consistently be called upon to choose life or death. The one choice excludes the other.*

The apparent inconsistency here, and difficulty of reconciling the parts of God and man, are no greater than necessarily attach to the whole subject. If God created man, spirit, soul, and body—if He upholds, guides, and controls my every power at every moment, so that in Him, “I live and move and have my being”—how can there be any movement or act of mine that is not wholly God's, or that can be dependent on me to put forth or forbear? Yet I know by my own consciousness that such is the case, and that I possess a power which is my own freely to exercise; above all that there is an act which is wholly my own, and which I dare ascribe in no respect to God—SIN, or the indulgence of *my self-will* in opposition to God's holy will. God, therefore, can make and has made me a free-will, responsible being; and in *every* individual act, if I am to be responsible for it, there must be a something, however small, left for me, which I can freely contribute or withhold. If man, for instance, has nothing to do of himself, and can do nothing to promote or retard his conversion and renewal, he can omit nothing, and therefore is not responsible for not believing and being converted. If God absolutely does all and leaves nothing whatever for man to do, then any omission is God's, and He is responsible for the omission, not man. But the very call to man to repent, to be converted, to believe, implies some such power granted him to follow it, otherwise it would be utterly unmeaning. If man is placed on his trial as a moral agent, and called upon to make

a choice which is to determine his doom for eternity, it is inconsistent to suppose that, by an absolute decree of election or reprobation, this choice is precluded, this trial foreclosed, and that God in His decree forgot the very free-will and responsibility with which He was about to endow His creature. In meditating on this question it will not do to "insulate the one view of the subject," to "keep the human side out of view, while the Divine side alone is insisted on,"\* to such an extent as to introduce statements or representations of Scripture-teaching, which directly contradict and exclude any independent volition on man's part; no more than it is correct to magnify the human side, or so to explain it as to interfere with the perfect sovereignty and predestination of God.

What the Bible (as well as reason) teaches is a *co-operation* all throughout of God and man. We must be "workers together with God" (2 Cor. vi. 1), as for the salvation of others, so for our own. We must "*work out* our own salvation with fear and trembling," because "it is God that *worketh* in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). While God is represented as doing all in all in man's salvation, He does nothing without man's concurrence. From the very beginning of the spiritual life to its end the doctrine of mutual co-operation is taught. While the conversion of the sinner is represented as God's great work, yet that a something is left to sinners themselves to contribute for which they are responsible is evident from the words, "*Turn ye, turn ye* from your evil ways, for why will ye die?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). It is God's to revive the soul "*dead in trespasses and sins*;" yet this must not be so rigidly interpreted as to exclude the exhortation, "*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. v. 14). It is the Lord's prerogative to "*create in us* a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us" (Ps. li. 10); yet God's own word expressly enjoins "*Make you a new heart and a new spirit*" (Ezek. xviii. 31), proving that man's consent is necessary for the new creation. A something, therefore, remains in every case for

\* Dean Alford's Introductory Remarks to Romans ix.-xi.

man's will to supply, as the condition on which God will act, and without which He will not perfect His work. Every exhortation addressed to man in Scripture, every call even to the unconverted to repentance, presupposes such a power in them to follow it. We cannot for a moment attribute to God such a mockery of His creatures as to call upon them to do what He well knows they can take no step whatever to further. The act of regeneration itself, the healing of the diseased soul, the power to stretch out the paralysed arm to lay hold on the offered remedy, is indeed wholly Christ's, but, as all Christ's miracles prove, it must be preceded by what the natural man can supply—the sense of his own need, the earnest desire and request to be healed, and belief in the Physician's power to effect the cure ; besides what these analogies could not clearly represent—the entire surrender of himself by the patient into the hands of his Physician to submit to any treatment or discipline, however painful, that He may deem necessary for his perfect cure.

It is for us, therefore, to see that we be careful to contribute our part. Let none presume ever to suppose that God can be wanting to *His* part, or to cast the blame of his own negligence and impenitence on the predestination of God. He will have all to be saved, and calls upon all men to come unto Jesus that they may have life ; and it were blasphemy to suppose that He offers for the acceptance of His creatures a gift which He had *causatively* foreordained that they should be unable to receive. He is ever working by His Spirit for *good—and for good only*—and strives with every man until he, by his own obstinate resistance, has destroyed within himself the susceptibility of renewal and done despite to the Spirit of grace.

We are not left without an analogy in God's providential arrangements to assist us in understanding the compatibility of the power of choice being divided between two parties. In a man's selecting a woman for his partner in life, the initiative is wholly on the man's side, who can say, "Thou hast not chosen me, but I have chosen thee" (John xv. 16). Yet this does not preclude the choice of the woman, who still has it in her power

to accept or refuse the offer made to her. The election, however absolute on the man's side, is still mutual, "Draw me, and we will run after thee" (Song of Solomon, i. 4).

Thus God's election and man's election may be mutually compatible. The one choice does not exclude the other.

*IV. Still it is urged that every "CONDITION" on the part of man is denied by the words of the Confession of Faith. "Those predestinated unto life God hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as CONDITIONS or causes moving Him thereunto" (ch. iii. 5).*

The emphasis, it is replied, is laid here on the wrong word. The whole gist of the passage lies in the last words, "*moving Him thereunto*," as will be seen by the difference of the reply that must be given in the cases of the elect and of the reprobate, as to whether there is any "condition or cause moving" God to the widely different dooms assigned to each. If it is asked, Is there anything foreseen in the creature either as "conditions or causes moving" God to the choice of the elect, the answer is, None; His own "mere free grace and love" moved Him to elect or choose them out of a godless world; everything in the ungodly sinful creature itself could only excite His just wrath and condemnation. But this by no means excludes, as has been too generally inferred, the opposite proposition with regard to the reprobate, that there may be something foreseen in the creature to prevent God from electing him, and "*moving*" Him to this rejection. If, on the contrary, it is asked, What is the *moving, conditioning cause* of God's reprobation of the non-elect? the answer is, The man's own obstinate resistance to all the invitations and motions of God's Holy Spirit, as foreseen, is the sole cause of his ruin and rejection. "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at

your calamity, and I will mock when your fear cometh," &c. (Prov. i. 24-28).

What is denied with regard to the elect is that there is anything in them as a "condition *moving* God" to their election. But this does not amount to a denial of all and every condition as differentiating them from the reprobate. Though no *positive*, there is a *negative* condition demanded, viz., that there shall be in them the absence of that self-induced obstinacy of resistance to every holy influence and unsusceptibility of renewal which, as foreseen by God, form the ground of the decreed rejection of the reprobate. The *non-existence* in the elect, foreseen by God, of this obduracy of will is an indispensable condition of their election and salvation, though not in the smallest degree "*moving* Him thereunto."

This we can easily understand by referring to the great type of election in the Old Testament Scriptures—the people of Israel. God, through Moses, frequently impressed upon them that there was nothing in themselves moving God to their election above other people, neither in their superior numbers nor in their righteousness. They were "the fewest of all people" (Deut. vii. 7); and as for merit or goodness in themselves He most carefully denies all claim to them on this score—"Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them [the Canaanites] out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land. . . . . Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people" (Deut. ix. 4-6). But does it follow that there was no sound intrinsic reason for the preference which God showed in electing them, and which made the Israelites more suitable for God's purpose than any other people (as the Egyptians, Assyrians, Canaanites, &c.) would have been? Why, even we can easily discern some of those points of difference in them, and a susceptibility which they possessed of being made

what God intended the subjects of His first great dispensation; and the types of the Christian Church, to be. No other nation would have answered God's purpose who were not all brethren, the children of one common father, partners together, first in the same grievous bondage, and then in a miraculous deliverance, &c.

Again, no one is more full and explicit than St. Paul in confessing that his election was solely of grace. He acknowledges himself to be "the chief of sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15), "not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. xv. 9), because he was a "blasphemer and a persecutor" (1 Tim. i. 13) of the Church of Christ, and holds himself forth as a wonderful instance of God's long-suffering patience, so great as to be "a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16), that none might despair of salvation. Never was there a case of conversion more entirely attributable to that sovereign and unmerited grace of which he himself is so full and eloquent an expounder; and yet this sovereignty and utter demerit were not incompatible, it would seem, with there being a condition and difference in his case, the want of which in most of his countrymen shut them out from the salvation of Christ. "I obtained mercy," he says (1 Tim. i. 13), "because I did it *ignorantly, in unbelief.*" This manifestly implies that had he willingly resisted, *knowing and believing* that this was the very Christ, and like other Pharisees continued to oppose, though convinced that this was "the heir," he would have prevented his own conversion and shut himself out from mercy. But he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19); and on this *negative* condition (known to God from all eternity), he implies that the grace which converted him was vouchsafed.

The terms in which the apostle elsewhere speaks of the election of believers show that it is not from anything *meritorious in themselves* that they are selected, but solely in Christ Jesus, "according as He hath chosen us *in Him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4). If the *meritorious cause* of the believer's election is inquired into, Christ's merits alone

form the ground of God's choice. Jesus is God's *chosen One*. "Behold mine *elect* in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah xlii. 1), and God "hath chosen us *in Him*." But this "moving cause" of God's election is in no way inconsistent with His requiring a condition in those of His creatures to whom it is to prove avail-ing. The condition is that fleeing out of ourselves, renouncing every claim to merit and all dependence on self, and acknowledg-ing that "*in us*, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing," we be "found *in Him*, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ" (Phil. iii. 9). This condition—*negative*, observe, and not positive or in any wise meritorious, the *absence* of that unsuscep-tibility of renewal which man may bring upon himself by con-tinued resistance to God's Spirit—is that which God, who knows beforehand perfectly what each of His creatures will choose, in-cludes as a necessary element to be found in all comprehended in His decree of election.

We are thus led to a far more worthy conception of God's election of some, and reprobation of others, than that which is usually entertained. Election is not that arbitrary, partial, and undiscerning *distinction without a difference* which some un-worthily attribute to the all-perfect and loving Father of all. Where God makes a judicial distinction in their final doom between two or more of His moral creatures, there must be some ground *in them* for the distinction, however imperceptible to us, even though all distinction be shut out in respect to right-eousness or merit. There must be a susceptibility for the pur-pose for which God designs them in those whom He selects ; there must be in those whom He rejects a self-wrought hardness and unsusceptibility for the end for which God created them, which occasion His righteous exclusion of them as reprobate. Election, or *choice*, between two or more things, to be intelligent, presupposes the discernment of some distinction *inherent in the objects themselves*, which forms the ground of our preference. To say that we can make an election or choice among twelve, let us suppose white marble balls all *exactly equal and similar in every respect*, is an abuse of terms. *Choose*, we cannot. We may single

out blindly six of the twelve, but it must be a mere hap-hazard, random act, where we are incapable of discerning the slightest difference between them. So it is an unbecoming conception of God's election to suppose that He makes a distinction where there is no difference; that some He chooses without any ground in them for preference, while others He arbitrarily rejects, who are in no wise more objectionable than those whom He has elected.

If all men were in themselves equal in *every* respect, elect and non-elect, and God select some and reject others, without any inequality on *their* part, it is evident that *God's ways* would be unequal—a charge which He repudiates with great indignation. “Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” (Ezek. xviii. 4, 23, 25.) Still there *is* an inequality, as the different destiny assigned to the elect and to the reprobate shows. By hypothesis of those with whom we are reasoning, the inequality exists not in the *individuals* themselves. Consequently the inequality must rest with *God*.

It is wholly irrelevant to reply that God may have some other good reason for the distinction He makes, that is *external* to the persons. This is the very essence of arbitrariness and partiality—to make a distinction in the treatment of two exactly equal for some secret reason of our own, unconnected with the individuals themselves.

The freeness of God's election is not infringed, nor the grace of His decree of mercy diminished by the condition to be fulfilled on man's part, no more than the freeness and grace of a sovereign's pardon, proclaimed to a rebellious province, would be lessened by the condition that all who will be benefited by it must accept the offer, and lay down the arms of their rebellion—and by his selection of those only as the objects of his mercy who, he knows, have yielded unfeigned submission to his terms. This, however, like every illustration borrowed from human transactions, gives but a faint idea of the graciousness and

power of God's electing mercy, which singles out and deals individually with each separate member, employing the special inducements and means best suited to arouse and reclaim each, so that for every preparatory movement towards repentance, and for every better thought, he is wholly indebted to that gracious Lord, who elects, draws him out, and rescues him from the midst of a godless world sunk in the mire and insensibility of sin.

*V. But lastly, it is objected that God's SOVEREIGNTY over all His creatures is asserted in the most unqualified terms in the Confession of Faith, that "He hath most sovereign dominion over all beings to do by them, for them, and upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth," ch. ii. 2. After mentioning God's free choice of the elect, "the rest of mankind," it is said, "God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice," ch. iii, sec. 7. Here (it is urged) a sovereignty is claimed for God, that seems to select or reject simply according to His own pleasure the objects of His mercy and of His severity, irrespectively of any diversity in them.*

To this we reply that God's sovereignty must never be so explained as to make it contradict and supersede any of the other attributes of God, as absolutely ascribed to Him both in Scripture and in the Confession. While it is said in the Confession that "He worketh all things according to the counsel of His own *immutable will*," it is added "and most *righteous will*," and He is described as "most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin," ch. ii. sec. 1. Everything that is arbitrary, partial, and despotic must be removed from our idea of God's sovereignty.

There is no attribute of God on which more vague ideas have been entertained than on this of His sovereignty, nor any, the

sphere of which, and its relation to His other attributes, it seems more necessary to define. In creation and in the bestowal of His gifts, God is entirely free and sovereign, assigning to all as it pleases Him their nature, their place, their endowments, and in the case of moral beings, all the variety of mental qualities and religious privileges which He sees most fitted for each. It is for God alone to determine whether any being He creates is to be an angel or a man, to be gifted with the faculties or culture of a Newton, or with only the intelligence and nurture of a Hottentot; to enjoy the full light of Christian education and teaching, or to be left to the darkness of heathen superstition. But in His moral government, and in the awards which He will adjudge to each for the improvement made of the gifts and opportunities allotted, not sovereignty, but righteousness presides, and will award to each not according to that which he had not, but according to that which he had, and to the use he made of it. It is the part of sovereignty to determine the gift, but not the reception or rejection of it, nor the use and improvement to be made of it by the recipient.

Further, in the case of those who have sinned, God is entirely sovereign to pardon or to condemn, to pass over the angels that fell, while He compassionates the fallen race of mankind—and out of the latter to choose some for mercy if He please, and others for severity, otherwise mercy were no more mercy. So far as mere *justice* is concerned, since all are rebels against Him, God might leave all to perish; and if He selects some as objects of His pardoning mercy, it gives no claim for similar compassion to others, nor ground of complaint on the score of *justice*, should He please to pass them over. "The potter hath power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour," Rom. ix. 21. On the ground of *right* none can question God's different treatment of those who have forfeited all title to any good at His hands. "Therefore hath He mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth," Rom. ix. 18.

But it is one thing what God has a right to do, and another what He actually does. It is one thing, what claims the crea-

ture has on God's *justice*, and quite another what God's *mercy* freely gives. And that mercy is equally boundless as all His other perfections, and knows no limits but those which the necessity of the case and the demands of His other perfections absolutely require. God's "tender mercies are over *all* his works," Ps. cxlv. 9. If He treats judicially one in one way, and another in another, both of whom appear to us to be in exactly equal circumstances, we may feel assured that it is because of some difference in them, however unobservable and inappreciable by us, that He makes the distinction—and which in the great day of judgment will be seen and acknowledged by them and by all to be exactly accordant with the most perfect mercy and impartiality. Nothing approaching to partiality, or inequality of dealing, must for a moment be attributed to God. *Impartiality* consists in treating those alike who are in exactly equal circumstances. God claims to Himself this perfection, as well as that of justice, "Are not my ways equal? saith the Lord. Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine," Ezek. xviii. "There is no respect of persons with God," Rom. ii. 11. While therefore we assert God's absolute right to "show mercy to whom he will show mercy, and whom he will [judicially] to harden," of which He alone is the sole and sovereign judge, we must be careful not to attribute to Him as His *actual* procedure what would in any way be contrary to His perfect impartiality, or to any of His other perfections, such as His universal and boundless love. If God has once resolved to extend mercy to a sinful world, we must not ascribe to Him anything like favouritism or partiality in its exercise, since He makes His offers of grace to all without exception, and has solemnly declared that "He is not willing that *any* should perish," 2 Pet. iii. 9, and that He "will have *all men* to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4. We must not suppose that for some secret reason of His own, altogether irrespective of anything in the creatures themselves, God shows mercy to some which He denies to others in exactly similar circumstances.

But is not this, it will be said, the very right of choosing some and rejecting others, simply *according to His own pleasure*,

which St. Paul claims for God in Rom. ix. 18, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth"? The *right*, certainly. Right, or justice, the criminal can never plead for his exemption from punishment, however much favour may be shown to others in what may appear similar circumstances to his own, and therefore St. Paul immediately repels the cavil of the Jew that there would be "*unrighteousness with God*" (ix. 14), if the Gentiles were admitted into the Christian Covenant and the Jews rejected. None are entitled to question God's right in His different treatment of different individuals. "Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (ver. 21.) The decision in such cases rests wholly with God, and none can say unto Him, What doest Thou? But as St. Paul immediately goes on to show (ix. 22-24), though in this respect God giveth no account of His matters to any one, and He is the sole judge who are the proper subjects for His pardoning mercy, and who for His hardening severity, we are never for a moment to doubt that *perfect unlimited love and discriminating impartiality* regulate God's procedure in every case. In the illustrative parable of the potter in Jeremiah xviii., God first claims absolute power over the Jewish, as over every nation and person, and the acknowledgment of this sovereign right from all, to deal with them as to Him seems best. "The vessel that the potter was making of clay," from some grit or other defect in the clay (doubtless from no unskilfulness on the part of the potter, who here represents the Lord), "was marred in the hands of the potter; so he made it again another vessel as seemed good to the potter to make it." So God asserts His right to do with Israel, to make and unmake them according to His sovereign will and pleasure. "O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." But having asserted this right, is it ever exercised by Him but in exact accordance with His other attributes of mercy, impartiality, and the most careful reference to the conduct of those under His moral government? Let His own words that

immediately follow in Jeremiah xviii. 7 decide. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."\*

Exactly so in Rom. ix., where, after asserting God's unchallengeable right alone to judge on whom to have mercy, and whom judicially to harden (ix. 14-18), and rebuking the daring impiety of sinful man in questioning the acts of the Sovereign Disposer of all (ix. 19-21), the apostle immediately goes on to show (ix. 22-24) that great forbearance and leniency had been exercised towards those "vessels of wrath," who had long been calling down God's wrath for their destruction; and that undeserved grace was shown unto those who, renouncing every claim to any *righteousness of their own*, "submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," (Rom. x. 3) and humbly accepted it as an unmerited gift.

Paul is here, as Jeremiah, arguing with the Jews who controv-  
erted God's *right* to cast them off after He had once called them,  
and against their plea of right appeals to God's sovereign right.  
Surely on the score of right, no creature has a claim to any thing  
from God but what He gives of His own good pleasure. To  
creatures who have sinned, all is mercy, free, unmerited grace.  
But while the Apostle brings forward God's absolute sovereignty  
to beat down every claim of desert, and to enforce that state of  
entire self-abasement and submissiveness indispensable for the  
reception of God's grace, it is a very different question *how* God  
exercises this right.

\* The same adjudication to *individuals*, to each in exact accordance with his use of the opportunities granted him, independently of the relations in which he may stand to others, is taught in Ezek. xviii., in illustration of the asserted equality of God's dealings.

Ver. 5. "If a man be just, &c.,—ver. 9, "he shall surely live."

Ver. 10. If he beget a son that is a robber, &c."—ver. 13, "he shall surely die : his blood shall be upon him."

Ver. 14. "Now, lo, if he [the robber] beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth and doeth not such like," &c.—ver. 17 "he shall not die for the iniquity of his father : he shall surely live."

God's sovereignty is thus in itself absolute, but is controlled and regulated by His other attributes of mercy and impartiality. If, in accordance with these, He has respect in His purposes and dealings to the different ways in which His offers of grace are treated by the elect and the reprobate, it were an abuse of terms to say that there is here an infringement of His sovereignty. That is no real limitation of God's right or power, which the harmonious actings of His whole nature and perfections prescribe to their exercise.

While, therefore, the Westminster Confession of Faith ascribes, as do the Scriptures, absolute sovereignty to God, it is of course to be understood that it is in complete accordance with all His other attributes of perfect mercy, love, and impartiality, that (as stated in Chap. iii., sec. 7) God, in forming His decrees, "was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures [which alone has to decide who are the proper objects for His mercy, and who for His severity, as well as to prescribe whatever terms of acceptance He sees meet for sinners], to pass by [those who will not submit themselves implicitly], and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin [in first rebelling and then obstinately refusing His offers of mercy], to the praise of His glorious justice." It is "for *their sin*"\* (as foreseen by God),

\* It is for "*their sin*,"—and let it be remembered what is the sin for which, ever since the fall, the final condemnation will be passed. Not for the *general sinfulness* of the race. All have received a respite, and are subjected to a new probation, not like that of Adam and Eve, whether they will retain their innocence; but whether, being sinners, they will accept the salvation freely offered to them through Christ Jesus. Those, and those only, who deliberately resist the movements of the *common grace* vouchsafed to all, and the influences of God's Spirit, who striveth with every man, are "passed by" without receiving the *special grace* necessary for their regeneration (see p. 31); and for this "*their sin*" in rejecting God's offers are rejected by Him, and "ordained to dishonour and wrath, to the praise of His glorious justice." Compare the Saviour's words, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19); and again, Mark xvi. 16, "He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved; but he that *believeth not* shall be damned."

not by any supralapsarian decree, irrespective of the creature's probation—and “to the praise of His glorious *justice*,” which renders to every man according to his deeds, not of His *arbitrary sovereignty*—that God is here said to “pass by” those whom He saw it not meet to choose, “and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath.”

It will be objected that the defence now offered of the Westminster Confession of Faith is not in accordance with the *historical* interpretation of that document, as determined both by the well-known sentiments of its authors, and by the general current of opinion ever since. But we beg to remind such objectors that no public and authoritative document like the Westminster Confession—no act of Parliament, for instance, and such *also* is the Westminster Confession—is to be interpreted as enjoining anything further than what it distinctly states, whatever may have been the sentiments of the majority of those engaged in drawing it up. Nay, the stronger that those sentiments may be known to have been, the very forbearance to give them distinct expression shews that the authors of the Confession did not deem it expedient to enforce them. It is too often forgotten with what deliberation all the statements in the Confession were weighed, the Assembly being composed of men holding very conflicting opinions, and how carefully the strong statements allowed to those on one side were guarded by counter-statements on the other. Such a formulary must be interpreted in consistency with itself, and by comparing attentively one part with another. While there were men of extreme views in the Westminster Assembly, who would have been inclined, like many of their successors since, to cut at once the Gordian knot by making God's Predestination and Sovereignty all in all, and man's free will and agency nothing, there were others who insisted on vindicating God's attributes and man's liberty by the insertion of the caution, “Yet so, as thereby neither is *God the author of sin*, nor is violence offered to the *will of the creatures*, nor is the *liberty or contingency* of second causes taken away, but rather established,” chap. iii. sec. 1.

Some would not have scrupled to have joined in the famed *dictum* of Calvin, which entirely excludes all “liberty or contingency,” and which, had it found sanction in the Westminster Confession, would have precluded the defence now offered for it, since it represents God as the cause of man’s reprobation equally as of his election. The passage occurs in Book III., chap. xxiii. 7, of his Institutes: “Whence comes it, I again ask, that the fall of Adam has involved so many nations with their infant children in eternal death without remedy, unless that such was the pleasure of God? A horrible decree, indeed, I admit; yet no one can deny but that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before He made him; and *foreknew* it on this ground, that He *had so ordained it by His own decree.*” These last words, in so far as they furnish any explanation of the grounds of God’s foreknowledge, can only mean that God cannot with certainty foresee any act left dependent on the freewill of another, unless he himself brings it to pass directly, or indirectly by influencing the wills of His creatures. This in reality makes God the responsible author of all things—of reprobation and its causes and consequences, equally as of election. But the assumption is wholly a gratuitous one, and in truth an unwarrantable bringing down of God’s perfections to the level of man’s powers. Because man foreknows as certain (and scarcely even that) no more than what he himself has predetermined to do, does it follow that God cannot? Are we so to limit God’s knowledge as to affirm that if He has determined to create a *truly free-will being* (that is, one capable of forming an independent volition of *his own*), He cannot infallibly foresee all the volitions of such a being, and yet reserve in his predestinating decree the freedom of choice necessary to the responsibility of the creature? Foreknowledge and causation have no necessary connection with each other. The assertion, though so confidently made by Calvin and Edwards, has no other foundation than our incompetency to comprehend God’s perfections, and to explain the *mode* by which foreknowledge and freewill are to be reconciled. With equal reason might we deny the possibility of God’s making a freewill creature at all, because we cannot com-

prehend how a creature dependent at every moment for all that he is, and has, upon the Creator, can originate an act (as sin), which is not God's; or we might deny the possibility of creation out of nothing, because, so far as human power and human comprehension reach, "*ex nihilo nihil fit*".

That Calvin ascribes the reprobation of the impenitent not to their sin and obstinate unbelief, and to God's righteous *justice* following thereupon, but solely to God's *Will* and *Sovereignty*, he leaves no room to doubt by his repeated assertions. Thus in Book III. chap. xxii. 11, he says, "Therefore, if we cannot assign any reason for His bestowing mercy on His people except that such is His pleasure, neither can we have any other ground for His reprobating others but *His own will*." Again, in Book III., chap. xxiii. 1, he says, "Those, therefore, whom God passes by He reprobates, and that *for no other reason* but because it is *His will* to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestines to His children." Calvin here evidently places election and reprobation on exactly the same footing, and makes God's sovereign will equally the cause of the one as of the other.

Now, not only has the Westminster Confession cautiously abstained from using such expressions, but it has distinctly asserted the very opposite. It says of the reprobate, that it is "for *their sin*" that God "ordains them to dishonour and wrath," and not, as Calvin says, "of *His own will*"—that it is "to the praise of *His glorious justice*," and not of *His sovereignty*.

In short—with regard to the Westminster Confession of Faith—just as we have found it necessary to do with regard to many scriptural truths—attention must be drawn to distinctions which have been too generally overlooked, and which, if once firmly grasped and distinctly kept in view, would put an end to much misapprehension and controversy.

The Westmister Confession is usually called Calvinistic. It is so in the sense that it sets forth clearly and prominently the cardinal doctrine of Calvin's system, which he has so conclusively established in opposition to all Arminian and Pelagian error, that the salvation of the redeemed originates wholly with

God, and is all, from first to last, solely the work of God's free sovereign will and grace, in their election, calling, conversion, renewal, and final sanctification, "without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto," chap. iii. 5.

But it is not Calvinistic in the sense of its adopting the error on the other side into which Calvin fell, of attributing Reprobation simply and solely to the will of God. Reprobation is not in its view an act of *sovereignty*, but of *justice*. It is a rejection after *probation*—which is presupposed in God's predestinating decree, and the result of it foreseen as issuing in the sin of obstinate unbelief—so that it is for this "their sin" and not from God's mere "will," that the finally impenitent are "ordained to dishonour and wrath." This probation Calvin's theory utterly ignores. Altogether irrespectively of what the creatures are to choose or do in the exercise of their freewill, he makes God to determine beforehand, of His own absolute will, the final destiny of each. "Predestination," he says, "is the eternal decree of God, by which He determined with Himself what He would have to be done with every man. For all are not created on equal terms; but to some of them eternal life is preordained, and to others eternal damnation. Therefore, according as each has been created *for* the one or the other of these two ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or death." Institutes, Book iii. chap. xxi. 5. God's *Sovereignty* he thus makes intrude into the province of His *Justice*. This is pure Supralapsarianism—an ordaining, without regard to anything men are themselves to do or choose, some, like Jacob, to eternal life, and others, like Esau, "to dishonour and wrath," not "for their sin," but according to God's absolute will and pleasure.

It is, indeed, "a gross error," as Dr. Crawford has well characterized it (into which Calvin seems to have fallen), "to attach to the decrees of God the idea of peremptory enactments, by which the will of some uncontrollable sovereign is rigidly enforced, and to ascribe to them a direct and potent influence in bringing to pass the events to which they relate" (see above, p.

10). But it is not difficult to see how Calvin has been misled into this error, and how so many supporters of the Confession of Faith—influenced by his authority, and supposing (notwithstanding the cautions of the Confession) that his and its doctrine were identical—have incautiously adopted it. “Nothing,” he justly argued, “can take place but according to God’s will. All things, therefore,” he inferred, “proceed from that Will, as their true original source.” In a certain sense this is true, so that God may be called the author of all things, *evil* as well as *good*, since without His permission moral evil could not have arisen—since, notwithstanding the abuse which, in choosing evil, God foresaw that His responsible creatures would make of their free-will, He still brings them into existence, and permits the evil to manifest itself, nay, “arranges and disposes” the very circumstances and objects that are to call forth the evil manifestations. But it is by His *permissive*, not *causative* will, that moral evil has a place in His world. “Not,” indeed, “by a *bare permission* (as the Confession states, ch. v. 4), but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is, nor can be, the approver of sin.” More particularly, as regards the sin of our first parents, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Quest. 13, tells us that “they were left to the freedom of *their own will*; and the Confession, ch. vi. sec. 1, says, “this, their sin, God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsels, to *permit*.” This “distinction,” however, “between [causative] *will*, and *permission*,” Calvin will not hear of (though it lies at the very foundation of the question); “Why (he insists) do we say that God *permits*, but just because He *wills*?” Book iii., chap. xxiii. 8. Calvin was afraid that if he conceded any originating power whatever to the creature’s will, the sovereignty of God would thereby be infringed. He does not see that by the repulsive aspect he gives to this attribute in pressing it beyond its legitimate sphere, and by making the sovereignty of God over-ride all His other attributes,

he throws an obstacle in the way of the cordial acceptance of this most important and humbling, yet consolatory truth. He does not see how much higher an idea it gives us of God's sovereignty and power, and wisdom, if, leaving the will of His creatures freely to exercise itself, He yet so overrules its determinations as, instead of obstructing, to promote His great purposes.

But further, the ascription of all things, even the volitions of the creature, to God's will as the originator and prime mover, gave a symmetrical roundness, completeness, and simplicity to the whole theory, most tempting to a logical mind like Calvin's. Let God's will take the initiative in everything, and all difficulty vanishes. God foreknows infallibly the volitions and acts of all His creatures—because He Himself originates, predestines, and orders all. Predestination and Freewill no longer *appear* irreconcilable. The problem is solved.

Doubtless—but how? By denying that there was any problem to be solved; by eliminating entirely the conflicting element on the opposite side of the question, and merging man's will wholly in God's will. The common sense of mankind has, it seems, heretofore been in error, in considering that man's will could originate anything—even *sin*. God is the originator of all—and, therefore, even of *sin*!

Doubtless the problem is solved. But at what an expense? The real problem or difficulty of the moral universe (see p. 15) is lost out of sight entirely, with all the power, and wisdom, and grace, manifested in its solution through Jesus Christ. One difficulty, indeed, is removed. But it is by introducing a host of others, which are urged as objections against the doctrine of the Confession of Faith, as supposed identical with Calvin's theory—and all of which, we think it has been shown, vanish as soon as we discard his error, and restore to freewill the originating power which is assigned to it in the Westminster Confession.

The objection of a friend suggests another distinction most important to be made, since it settles, if I mistake not, the whole question. His objection is this: "Perfect freedom of

will, and freedom from sin, are by no means incompatible, as is evident from the cases of the angels in heaven, and of ‘the spirits of the just made perfect’. Why, therefore, could not God from the first, had He so pleased, have preserved man infallibly in a state of perfect rectitude, without impairing his freedom of will? And if so, what prevents Him now turning the hearts of all men whomsoever He will, and saving all, if such were His pleasure, without any interference with their freewill? He has but to place sufficiently powerful motives before them, and to enforce them by His Spirit, and the change of man’s will must indubitably follow. What, then, becomes of your Theodicy, or attempt to find a ground in the individuals themselves for the distinction which God makes in the election of some and reprobation of others? Must we not revert to Calvin’s explanation of referring both simply to the sovereign will of God?”

The cases adduced, it is replied, are not in point. The angels were “left to the freedom of their own will.” If now incapable of falling, they were not originally so, nor kept in every instance from taking the fatal step, as is proved by the case of the fallen angels. The saints in heaven, again, *have had* their probation. They were left to make, and have made, their choice. Acknowledging their own utter powerlessness to change their evil hearts, and when converted to keep themselves from relapsing, they “*chose* that better part which shall not be taken from them;” they cast themselves simply on their Redeemer, whose infinite power and love are henceforth pledged for their preservation. Once the believer has surrendered himself unreservedly to Christ, no being or thing, not even his own treacherous heart, can separate him even here from Christ (Rom. viii. 35), since he is “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter i. 5); how much more in heaven, where there shall be no more temptation to assail, and where God’s mysterious law of habit will lend its aid, by which whatever is long and perseveringly practised becomes as it were a second nature?

The objection derives its plausibility from confounding the

sphere of freedom necessary for the will in a state of probation, with that which it will have when the probation is ended.

The whole tenor of Scripture, and all God's treatment of man in Providence and in Redemption, point to this—that the present world is designed as a state of *probation*, to give to each an opportunity of deliberately making his choice between good and evil. To render a being truly moral, and capable of the highest happiness and glory to which a creature can attain, he must, it appears, be subjected to a trial, and choose freely, and of his own accord, that better part which shall then become unalterably his. Life and death, good and evil, must be so placed before him, and his will be left so far free, as to render the choice truly his own. We cannot doubt but that God could, by placing overpowering motives before the mind, turn it either way. But this would not answer the purpose He has in view, which is to prove His moral creature. For this purpose He must place the two alternatives, with the motives to each, so balanced before him (at least in the great critical moments that are to decide his final doom), that man is able, by the self-determining power committed to him, to turn the scale to either side. Not *God's* will, therefore (as Calvin would have it), must determine at this particular point, but *man's* will, however much it may have been prepared and aided before by God's Spirit. Man's probation, indeed, does not now, as did that of our first parents, consist *directly* in choosing between good and evil—whether he will continue in his integrity, or fall from it; but whether, having fallen, he will rise again, or sink—whether he will accept or refuse the salvation freely offered and pressed upon him. Now we cannot for a moment suppose that God calls upon His creature—upon the pain of life or death—to do that which He withholds from him the power to do. If God calls upon man to choose, He must leave that *little* for him freely and unbiassedly to decide, which will make the choice truly his own. That *little*, let it not be forgotten (as was shown above, p. 23), is not to remove the *moral inability* of the will—this is the great work which Divine power offers to effect for him—but by the *natural ability* which the will of fallen man

still retains, to put forth his hand and receive the remedy which will release his will from its moral bondage, and bring him "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 21.

The distinction now drawn between the *kind* of freedom indispensable for a state of probation, and the freedom which the will shall retain in a future world, I consider to be of the very highest importance in settling this most intricate question. It gets rid of all metaphysical subtleties and disputes as to the nature of that freedom of will which is necessary to constitute a moral being. In a future world the grand question between Necessitarians and Non-Necessitarians will lose its importance, since *moral* necessity will apparently bring about all the same results of deliberation as *natural* necessity, so far at least as *moral* volitions are concerned. Given the circumstances and motives then placed before the mind—and the choice that will be made may be calculated with certainty, since the moral state of the mind (the only other element in the calculation) will then be immutably fixed for good or for evil. But if this be the only kind of freedom conceded to the will in the present world, there can be no *probation*, *i.e.*, no possibility of moral choice between good and evil—between life and death. Deny the power of choice between these alternatives to man now, or suppose its result to depend only on God and not on the creature, and there will be no probationary trial—no more here, than there will be hereafter. Without this *probationary* freedom of will for which we contend, the present life and world become meaningless and delusive. God seems to give to man a power to choose, and yet He determines that choice for him irresistibly by the circumstances, and motives, and mind which He appoints to him. God calls upon His creature to do that which He leaves him no power to do.

Beyond all question, therefore, man must have this *probationary* power of will, in himself and of his own free motion to turn either way—in the great critical moments that are to decide his fate. Nay more, there must be no *moral necessity even* laid upon him, by the motives inclining to either side being too strong for his will to overcome—else there can be no probation,

or fair trial for the creature. The motives, then placed before him by God, must be so equally balanced that the creature feels and knows, and will acknowledge at the final judgment, that the decision was his own, in accepting or rejecting the offers placed before him for his choice.

If such be the power of will now possessed by man, and such the choice placed before him, simply to accept, or to refuse, the salvation which God offers—when by the teaching of His Spirit He has brought each to see his misery and helplessness, the grace and love that stand ready to help him, and the mighty issues that depend on his acceptance or rejection—then can we understand the intensity of the interest with which the inhabitants of heaven are represented as looking on and watching the decision of each, and “the joy that there is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,” Luke xv. 10. Then can we understand—if God has to restrain, as it were, His power, in order to leave His creature free to exert his power—how He can with all truth exclaim, “What *could* have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” Isaiah v. 4. But if, as Calvin maintains, not man’s will, but God’s, decides the choice of the Reprobate, then the lamentation of the Almighty over their obduracy and impenitence becomes simply unintelligible: “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” Ezek. xxxiii. 11. If God’s will be that which decides the creature’s choice of evil, it seems impossible to reconcile with such a supposition the solemn assertion of His own word: “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” 2 Pet. iii. 9. In Scripture every movement of God’s *Spirit*, of God’s *will*, of God’s *pleasure*, is represented as ever prompting to good in His creatures, never to evil—to their salvation, never to their destruction. “The *Spirit* lusteth against the flesh,” Gal. v. 17. “This is the *will* of God, even your *sanctification*,” 1 Thess. iv. 3. “God *will* have *all* men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth,” 1 Tim. ii. 4. “Have I any *pleasure* at all that the wicked

should die ? saith the Lord God ; and not that he should return from his evil ways and live ?" " I have no *pleasure* in the death of him that dieth," Ezek. xviii. 23, 32. It seems, therefore, a gross misrepresentation of the truth, and in direct contradiction to Scripture, when Calvin refers the Reprobation of the impenitent to God's will and pleasure as the *originating* cause : e.g., " If we cannot assign any reason for God's bestowing mercy on His people, but just that it so pleases Him, neither can we have any reason for His reprobating others but His *will*." " You see how he [St. Paul] refers both to the mere *pleasure* of God," Instit. Book iii., ch. xxii. 11.

Why, then, perhaps it will be asked, create beings subjected to such a fearful alternative ? Let us beware, lest by such an objection we incur the censure of the apostle, " Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ?" Rom. ix. 20. Was God to be precluded from creating such a being as man, whose very fall has furnished scope for the brightest manifestations of God's perfections, and from endowing him with a moral and responsible nature, capable of attaining to the most transcendent happiness and glory—to be an " heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ"—because some fail to stand the moral probation indispensable for this end, and abuse their high capacities to their own and their Creator's dishonour ?\*

It is with no little misgivings that I have ventured to express my sentiments on questions so abstruse and difficult, which have divided so many wise and good men ; and it is only from a deep sense of their important bearing on our views of the divine perfections and government, and of man's responsibility and final destiny, and from an anxious desire to remove, if possible, the scruples of many sensitive minds, that I at length submit them to the candid consideration of the reflecting reader. They have been the result of much anxious thought and of a sincere determination to seek, unbiassed by any preconceptions, the simple truth ; and I shall feel grateful to be shown wherein I have erred, and to be taught " a more excellent way." I could not, however, rest satisfied with the prevailing misrepresentations

\* See Appendix.

(as they appeared to me) of the doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, which has prevented many from accepting cordially the highly important truth so strongly insisted on by Calvinism, from the idea that they must accept also the false inference that has been mixed up with it. The highly important truth so prominently brought out by Calvinism, let me again repeat, is that Election and Predestination to good originate wholly with God, who by His own special grace singles out its fitting objects, and by His own sole power effects the regeneration and final perfection of the Elect, so that the glory of their salvation from first to last is attributable entirely to "His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving Him thereunto," (Confession of Faith, chap. iii. 5).

The false inference almost universally mixed up with this, indeed stated to be "its necessary complement," is that Reprobation and Foreordination to evil are owing to God's withholding from others, according to His own free will and pleasure, that special grace without which they cannot turn unto God. Those who are not included in the decree of election are represented as being passed by and left by God to perish, without receiving any benefit from Christ, but rather the contrary, since by the extension of life procured by Him to Adam and his race, without which they would not have come into existence, they have been born in a state of hopeless sin and inherited moral impotency, for the removal of which, it is represented, they can take no step whatever.

The obvious objections to such a view are so grave as to form a strong presumption that some error must lurk under it.

1. It represents God as *imperfect and deficient in love*; as able to save all if He would, and yet not willing to do so; in direct opposition, too, seemingly to His own repeated declarations in Scripture, "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9; God "will have all men to be saved," 1 Tim. ii. 4, &c., &c.

2. It represents God as *partial and unequal in His dealings*;

not treating all equally who are in exactly equal circumstances (*all* being dead in trespasses and sins), and this in face of His own indignant repudiation of such inequality, "O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine," Ezek. xviii. 4, 29.\*

3. It represents God as making the Gospel-offer to many for whom He never intended it, and beseeching them to accept a Saviour who never died for them, and afterwards condemning them for the rejection of this offer.

It avails not to reply that they know not this (that their names are not included in the décret of election) at present, when urged to accept the offer. They will know it at the last day, and therefore will then be able with justice to plead,—No Saviour ever died for me; consequently, I never rejected a Saviour.

4. It makes God the *abettor*, if not the *author of sin*. God, according to the usual theory, has but to will the change of the sinner's heart to the love of holiness, and yet forbears to will it. Now, according to His own unerring word, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," James iv. 17. To refrain from doing good and saving life, when it was in the power of His hand to do it, Jesus held would be equivalent in Him to killing and doing evil, Mark iii. 4.† Unless, therefore, we will hold righteousness to be one thing in Christ and another in God, there must be some error in the usual representation.

5. It represents the Gospel message in such a light as throws a formidable obstacle in the way of its reception. Expressed in plain terms, the Gospel message, according to the prevalent theory, would sound much as if a king sent by his messengers, to a province that was in rebellion against his government, a general offer of pardon to all, in terms to this effect:—

\* The great object of the whole chapter is to show that each man's place and final destiny are dependent not on inherited, but on personal, sin or righteousness—not on any arbitrary appointment of God, but on his own choice and conduct.

† Compare Seneca's maxim, "Qui non vetat peccare cum possit, jubet."

"We are commissioned by our Sovereign to proclaim a full and free pardon to all who will accept it, and will lay down the arms of their rebellion. The king is not willing that any of you should perish. He wills that all be saved. He therefore beseeches you, one and all, by us his ambassadors, to be reconciled to him, warning you, at the same time, that whoever refuses, his blood will be upon his own head.

"But while we thus make offer of free pardon to all, and press upon each of you to accept it, we know that it is the secret purpose of the sovereign not to pardon all, but that he has determined to save only a select number, whom he has chosen out solely of his own absolute will, without reference to anything that you may do or choose."

Would not such an announcement, in a great measure, neutralize any good effect that the former part of the message might have produced, and lead the hearers to distrust the sincerity of the king's offers? But what must they think if the messengers were to add, "The king knows well that ever since you entered on your rebellion, those intoxicating draughts and drugs which you are in the habit of taking have gained such a power over you that you cannot resolve on giving them up (which is an indispensable condition of your pardon) unless he administers an antidote to you to cure your craving for them. This antidote, however, he administers secretly only to those whom he has selected beforehand; and in this way, while he offers the pardon to all, you yourselves will appear to have all the blame in refusing."

If the former announcement of the king's secret purpose left any heart in the hearers to comply with the invitation, this surely would paralyze every desire or effort at amendment.

If such be a correct representation of the Gospel-offer (and I am not aware that I have in any respect overcharged it), as it would appear if expressed in plain terms according to the prevalent interpretation of Predestination—need we wonder if Predestination, instead of affording (as the Confession of Faith represents it, chap. iii. 8), "matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant

consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel," is regarded by both preacher and hearers as a repulsive mystery from the consideration of which they shrink as with instinctive dread? Must there not be something wrong, where the professed creed and the systematic preaching so differ, that the minister of the word "*shuns to declare*" to his hearers "*all the counsel of God?*"

All these difficulties and objections seem to be removed by the view propounded in the foregoing pages. Every truth of importance is conserved by it, and none violated. God's attributes are maintained, yet man's responsibility not impaired. The whole glory of the Elects' salvation is ascribed to God, yet no ground is given for a charge of defect of love or of impartiality towards the Reprobate. While all merit or boasting is shut out to the believer, no excuse is left to the impenitent on the pretext of sufficient means and grace being withheld from him. The perfections of God are not set at variance, but all are brought into harmonious consistency. God's Sovereignty is not exalted at the expense of His Impartiality, nor His Justice at the expense of His Mercy. His most distinguishing attribute of Love is not restricted by confining it to a portion only of His creatures. God does not prepare a limited salvation for a few, and then urge its acceptance on all, and condemn for its rejection those for whom it never was designed. He does not hold out the offer of pardon to all if they will only stretch out their hand and take it, while yet the arm of every prisoner is pinioned helplessly down, with the exception of the elect few whose bonds He has secretly loosed. Election no longer appears to be an arbitrary distinction made without a difference, nor Reprobation a passing by without probation, or Saviour truly offered, or any greater demerit on the part of its objects "moving thereunto." Predestination assumes its true place as a blessed truth, assuring the believer that all his sin, and weakness, and dangers have been fully anticipated and provided for, and every step in his onward progress pre-arranged and ensured, so that no unforeseen obstacle or enemy can arise, to make him come short of his eternal reward. What more delightful or consolatory truth could be imagined than that which creates the

assurance that, amidst the seemingly fortuitous medley of good and evil which besets our path here below, all things are under the perfect regulation and control of a heavenly Father—and that not the slightest occurrence can take place, even through the wayward wills of the wicked, that has not been foreseen, and had its place adjusted beforehand in the perfect plan of Him who overrules all things to work out His own great and glorious purposes, for the highest possible good of all !

EDWARDS ON THE "FREEDOM OF THE WILL."

Our remarks on Predestination and Freewill would be incomplete without some notice of President Edwards' celebrated treatise on the "Freedom of the Will," since it has been so identified in the minds of many with the doctrine of the Westminster divines, that it is conceived both must stand or fall together. So far, however, is this from the truth, that it is, in fact, in direct contradiction to it. This even his own son, Dr. Edwards, President of Union College Schenectady, saw and acknowledged, as is proved by the following extract.\* "Even the famous Assembly of Divines had very imperfect views of this subject. This they prove when they say 'Our first parents, *being left to the freedom of their own will*, fell from the estate wherein they were created ;' and 'God foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, so as the *contingency* of second causes is not taken away, but rather established.' These divines unquestionably meant that our first parents, in the instance at least of their fall, acted from self-determination, and by mere contingency or chance. But there is no more reason to believe this, than there is to suppose it true of every sinner in every sin which he commits."

The first quotation here from the Shorter Catechism certainly does imply "the *self-determination* of the will," which is the great point that Edwards sets himself to controvert ; and the second, from the Confession of Faith, implies that *contingency*, or

\* "From the Memoirs of Johnathan Edwards," prefixed to his works, p. cccxxv. of the London Edition in 2 vols., Ball, Arnold, & Co.

freedom to choose either the one way or the other, is left to man, though yet the result has been perfectly certain beforehand to God, and predestinated and provided for.

It has become the more necessary to expose the fallacies in this famed treatise, since, as Isaac Taylor remarks in his Preliminary Essay prefixed to his edition of it, it has become the text-book to which every infidel appeals as confirmatory of the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, which binds every moral being in the chains of the most stringent fatalism, and entirely releases man from all responsibility for his actions.

Never perhaps was there a more remarkable instance exhibited of the weakness and fallibility of human reason than in this Essay. Here we have an eminently great and good man, and one of the most powerful intellects that has ever appeared, imposing upon himself and others by an argument which has by high authority been pronounced *unanswered and unanswerable*, and which yet consists of a series of the most egregious fallacies.

1. In the very outset, Edwards begins with confounding *will* and *desire*. Instead of assisting the reader by tying down *will* or *votion* to the one proper meaning—in this aspect—of the *final choice* or determination which, all things considered, the mind eventually forms, he attempts to obliterate the distinction which Mr. Locke had already drawn between them. “A man,” says Edwards, “never in any instance wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will.” “The thing which he wills, the very same he desires.” Now, on the contrary, Abraham *willed*, (that is determined), to slay his son Isaac, but it is surely an abuse of language to say that he *desired* it. In meditating on the line of conduct proper for us to pursue, everything that would incline us to a particular course, may be said in its turn to be an object of *desire*, as it passes in review before the mind; but not of *will*, properly so called, with the exception of that *finally chosen*. Instead of mystifying himself and the reader by confounding the two words, it would have been much more to the purpose to have drawn the distinction more sharply between them, and to have pointed attention to the

fact that the word *will* is often used in both meanings, and to the consequent necessity of distinguishing carefully between them. According to Edwards' definition, which would blend both senses into one, our Lord's words could have no meaning in John vi. 38, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." In the strict sense of will, that is, the volition formed or final determination, Christ never had a will which He could call "mine own will," in contradiction to that of His Father. His will (determination) uniformly coincided with His Father's will. In saying, therefore, that He came *not to do His own will*, we must assign to *will* the meaning not of volition or determination, but of *desire*: "I came not to do my own desire, or wish prompted by my human nature." In many cases, that which is the object of our strongest *desire*, is not that which forms our final *will*, or determination. Thus, it was an object of the most intense *desire* with our Lord, in His agony in the garden, that the cup of suffering should, if possible, pass from Him; but His *will*, or fixed determination, was to submit implicitly to whatever His Father should appoint; "Nevertheless, not my will (desire), but Thine be done."

Had this double meaning of the word *will* been kept closely in view, much misunderstanding and unseemly controversy might have been spared that have divided Christian disputants, by showing them that their contention was one of words, and not of things. In speaking of God's will, for instance, it will be seen that when His *absolute will* is meant—as the *final determination* that He forms, all things being taken into consideration, e.g., His own righteousness, and the free-will choice of His creatures—it is God's will that impenitent sinners shall perish. But when by God's will is meant His *desire*, or *will of benevolence*, then it is not His will that any sinners should perish, but that all should believe on His Son and live. In the former sense God's will is never resisted; in the latter, it is, alas! resisted every day.

The same ambiguity attaches to all the words, such as *purpose*, *intention*, &c., and the various modes of expression, employed with regard to this subject. Suppose the question to

be, Did Christ die for all men, or only for the Elect?—there is an ambiguity which must be carefully noted, that the answer may not be misunderstood. If the *absolute will, purpose, or intention*, is meant of Him who knows beforehand with certainty who will accept, and who will not accept, His offers of salvation, the answer, of course, must be, “*Christ died for the Elect, and for the Elect only.*” But if God’s *benevolent will, purpose, or intention* in giving his Son is meant, then the answer is, “*Christ died for all men.*” “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the *sins of the whole world,*” 1 John ii. 2. “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour of the world,*” 1 John iv. 14. “For God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,*” John iii. 16. “God is the Saviour of *all men*, especially of those that believe,” 1 Tim. iv. 10. “As by the offence of one judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, even so by one righteousness the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life,” Rom. v. 18. Here the “*all men*” in the first clause includes all *without exception*; surely in the second clause, it must have an equally universal application, and mean that according to God’s *benevolent will, purpose, or design*, the Gospel salvation has been procured for all *without exception*, though many put the gracious offer away from them.

Had the ambiguity attaching to these modes of expression been observed, the forced construction put upon these and similar passages of Scripture by Calvin and others, in order to make them suit with their one-sided conception, would have been seen to be perfectly unnecessary. Why should there be any greater difficulty in understanding the simple language of the Bible on this subject than would be found in any of the transactions between man and man? Suppose that a province of a sovereign’s dominion had been in rebellion against him, and that his son had interceded for them, and came with the message, “I have procured a general pardon for all. My father is not willing that any rebel amongst you should perish; to all I bring a message of forgiveness.” Every one would understand

at once the implied condition, Provided that you accept the free offer and lay down the arms of rebellion. None would ever think of wasting their time in a fruitless dispute, "Is the Prince come as the saviour of all, or only of a select few?" He is the saviour of the select few only who submit; he is the saviour of all except those who by their own wilful rejection of the gracious offer exclude themselves. The free gift has come upon all unto pardon and acceptance.

Equally unedifying and verbal will be seen to be the contention, Is the atonement of Christ limited, or unlimited? In God's *absolute* will, it is limited. In the eye of Him who sees and knows all hearts, and what each in the exercise of his free-will will choose, it is limited to those alone who will avail themselves of it. In God's benevolent will and purpose, who "will have *all* men to be saved," it is unlimited—"a propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*," 1 John ii. 2. It is unlimited, by God's gracious will: limited, by *man's* wayward will. "How often *would I* have gathered thy children together—and *ye would not!*" Matt. xxiii. 37.

II. The second fallacy observable in Edward's Essay is a sophism, into which great logicians seem particularly liable to fall—apparently from their perfect confidence in their own powers to detect all fallacies in the *process* of reasoning—the assumption without due examination of *false premisses*, amounting sometimes, as in the case before us, to a complete *petitio principii*. Quietly assuming that there can be no such thing as Freedom of Will in the true sense of a self-moving or self-determining power, he imposes on himself and his readers by commencing with a false definition of the term. Liberty of Will he defines to be, "Doing as one pleases," Part i. sect. v. But this is liberty of *action*, not of *will*. This is liberty not of *pleasing*, but of carrying out one's pleasure, that is one's volitions, after these, according to Edward's theory, have been necessitated for him by the motives presented to his mind, and the previously necessitated state of his mind. With as much propriety might we say that a machine, or the earth in moving round the sun, has freedom of will, because, after the motive impulse is given,

it is free to move, without any obstruction in the way to impede its motion. Thus viewed, the question of the liberty of the will loses all interest in a moral point of view, as it leaves no room for responsibility. This will be evident from a simple example. Suppose that I, seeing a child upon the point of drowning in deep water, have resolved to rush in and save the child's life, but am forcibly restrained by the by-standers, neither I nor others can lay on me the charge of the child's death. My act consisted in forming the volition to save the child, and therewith my responsibility ended. That I was not free to carry out the resolve of my will and to "*do as I pleased*," was not my fault, but that of others. Again, suppose that I raise my hand with the intention of plunging a dagger into my neighbour's breast, but that my arm is arrested by others; in the judgment of conscience and of God I am equally responsible, as if I had succeeded in executing the murderous intent. In both cases the purpose, or volition, was already there; and in my power to *determine* of myself—to form, or to forbear to form, the volition—alone lies my responsibility. The freedom to *do* as I had *willed* or *pleased*, is a subsequent consideration with which the freedom of the will has no concern.

Edwards thus, as we see, denies the existence of the Freedom of the Will in any legitimate sense of the term, and consequently denies man's responsibility; for if the will is not free to form its own volitions independently, and to determine itself, it is clear that it can be as little answerable for the conclusions at which it arrives. By an erroneous definition of the term, Edwards has contrived to conceal from himself this startling result (which might have made him pause), and by the great influence of his name has led others to acquiesce in this dangerous conclusion. Starting from false premisses, which assume the whole question in dispute, he gains an easy victory. No wonder that by those who inadvertently concede the premisses, "Edwards on the Will" should have been pronounced "a work which never was answered, and which never will be answered."

But this is not the only ambiguity connected with the expression, the "Freedom of the Will." There is a *natural* freedom of

the Will which is of the very essence of the Will, without which it would cease to be a will, or man to be responsible : there is a *moral* freedom of the will, the loss of which by no means destroys his responsibility, but rather aggravates his guilt and condemnation. There is, for instance, no want of *natural* energy of will often in the acts of a man under the influence of intoxicating liquors, though he has lost for the time all *moral* power of will to restrain himself : and if under these circumstances he is hurried on to commit some flagrant act, we blame him only the more for having brought himself into this state of moral inability. This moral bondage of the will with regard to spiritual good, with man's powerlessness to free himself from it, was the great point insisted upon by our Reformers, and so strongly urged in the Westminster Confession of Faith in ch. ix. —the great importance of which Edwards, Chalmers, and other Necessitarians have unfortunately tended to throw into the shade, by mixing up and confounding together the *moral* and *natural* freedom of the Will, and maintaining that we are equally destitute of the one as of the other.

But III. The fundamental error which lies at the root of Edward's theory, and which occasions many of the prevailing errors in Mental Philosophy and Theology in the present day, is the forgetfulness of the characteristic distinction between Matter and Mind, and the transference of the language, which is originally and strictly applicable to the former, to the latter, without making the due deduction arising from the essential distinction between them.

Now the grand distinction between matter and mind is this : Matter is essentially inert. It moves as it is moved. It is totally destitute of any inherent *power*, like that of mind, which can repress or put forth its energy at pleasure, and determine the mode, time, and direction of its action. When we see matter move, we immediately and justly ascribe the origin of the motion to some *power* extrinsic to the matter, and inquire after the motive power, or what was the efficient cause of the motion. We never for a moment suppose that it possesses a voluntary, self-moving, originating power of its own, but that it must move or act in one

uniform undeviating manner under exactly the same circumstances.

When mind acts, on the contrary—in other words, puts forth a volition, or exerts its will, it is the man himself that acts. The power is intrinsic. I do not, like a piece of inert matter, merely follow an impulse given to me from without. It is I myself that act, that originate the action or motion, which, at the same time I feel I could repress. I am the *agent*—a term that can never for a moment be applied to matter, and which marks the grand characteristic distinction between matter and mind. If it be asked, On what evidence do I ground this distinction, and claim for myself such an intrinsic power? I answer, On the highest and surest of all evidence—on that of consciousness. I *know* and *feel* that I have *power*—power which I can put forth, power which I can restrain, the use and direction of which I can vary, and for which I am responsible; whereas the whole of science is built on the opposite conclusion with regard to material *forces*—that there is no room for any voluntary action or self-restraint on their part—that they must act, or not act, according to the most definite and invariable laws. A spring, for instance, when bent or forced from its natural state, the moment that the constraining force is removed, must instantly start back and recover its original position. I repeat, therefore, that I know myself to be the voluntary, originating cause of my own action or motion. I possess a self-moving, self-determining, and directing energy within myself, in the possession of which alone consists my responsibility—and to inquire what *moved* my mind, in the proper sense of the term, is to ignore my essential nature as a voluntary agent, and to confound *power*, which mind alone possesses, with material *force*.

All this will be clear from an illustration. Standing beside a billiard table, I observe a red ball to roll and fall into the pocket beside me, and a white ball to roll into the opposite pocket. Tracing the cause, I find that the red ball was propelled by the white ball striking against its side. But what gave the white ball its impulse?—for I never for a moment suppose that a piece of inert matter originated the motion of itself. I find it

received its impulse from a cue, which again was moved by a player's arm, and this arm by the will of an intelligent agent. At length I am satisfied in my search. I have reached the primary cause, or more properly agent, and I inquire no farther. Observe the wide distinction between the last stage in the process of the inquiry and all the previous steps. In all the previous steps, in the red ball, the white, the cue, and even in the arm of the player, I trace a series of *forces* indeed, but still material and unintelligent, determined wholly in impetus and direction by the impulse given to them, and with a mathematical precision so exact that the skilful player can calculate upon them with certainty. Still none of these is an efficient, originating cause, endowed with power of self-motion or self-determination. But so soon as I have traced the series of movements to an intelligent mind, I cease my inquiry as to the origination of the motion. I have found that which I know from past experience, and from the consciousness of a similar mind within myself, to possess an innate power of originating and directing motion or action. In all the previous steps of the investigation I recognized but *matter*—in this *mind*; in those *motion*—in this *action*; in those a *cause*—in this an *agent*; in those *force*, inert, involuntary, unintelligent—in this *power*, living, voluntary, self-conscious, that can act or forbear to act at pleasure, and determine the direction and degree of the action or energy it shall put forth. All the other causes were but *secondary*, but now I have reached the *primary, efficient* cause. I have discovered the *motive, self-determining* power, and my search, I repeat, as to the origination of the motion is at an end.

Not so, however, the Necessitarian's. He immediately sets to inquire, but what moved, what determined the mind? Misled by the ambiguity of the word *motive*, and forgetful that it is only in an improper and figurative sense that all language, *which is borrowed from sensible things*, applies to mind, the Necessitarian, observing the analogy that mind cannot act without a *motive force*, transfers immediately the relation of physical cause and effect, true of the one, to the other. The fallacy here,

and the wide distinction between the two, may at once be made clear by following out our illustration.

The mind, Edwards argues, cannot move without a motive, that is, according to him, a cause ; and a self-determining power without a cause for the determination is absurd. If so, what was the motive that moved the player's mind to make the stroke we supposed ? It was the desire of making a good score by sending both balls into the pockets at once. It was a *desire* then, it seems, that moved the balls ! While a man himself, or his mind, or whatever is to be regarded as his proper *Ego* or personality, is not allowed to be capable of originating motion, a mere abstract thing called a *desire* possesses this power, and a *desire* propelled that white ball on the billiard table !

But why does the Necessitarian stop here ? Must he not, according to his principles, go on to inquire, What moved this motive ? What was its cause ? Or are we to ascribe to it a self-moving, self-determining power ? But this according to the necessitarian theory is absurd. We must have a previous motive to determine and to move this motive ; and when the Necessitarian has assigned this, we next ask, But what again moved this motive ?—and so on *ad infinitum*, till we land in making God the originating cause of every act and desire, and making man a mere machine, moved as he is moved, and incapable of spontaneous choice or responsibility.

But even this will not avail to us as a resting-place. If motives are the real originating cause of every act, since no intelligent being can act without a motive, what becomes of God's own free agency ? God, no more than man, can act without a motive, that is, according to the definition we are now considering, without a motive power distinct from Himself. There is thus a power, it seems, distinct from, and antecedent to God, and that determines all His acts ; and thus we land in the Fate of the ancients, and in constituting a God above God !

All these difficulties and this confusion vanish the moment we perceive that a motive is not really the *beginning*, but the *end*, of an agent's act of will. We have here a notable instance how easily we are misled by a word. *Motive*, according to its

etymological meaning, does indeed signify a *moving power*. But it has been forgotten that, since all language relating to the mind and mental operations is borrowed necessarily from material things, it is only in a figurative sense that the word motive is used, and that we must be careful in our reasoning not to transfer to mind the *inertia*, which differentiates matter from mind. The fact is, the motive, instead of being that which *initiates* action, is, on the contrary, the *end* to which it tends. Take an instance. Eve saw before her a desirable fruit, and was tempted to pluck and eat by—let us take the simplest of the motives—her appetite. She “saw that the tree was good for food.” The motive, we say in common language, that induced her to put forth her hand was the fruit before her—or rather the desire of indulging her appetite. But in truth this was the *end* that she proposed to herself. Two opposite objects of desire (motives) were before her: on the one hand, God’s command, and the satisfaction arising from obedience to it; on the other, the fruit, and the satisfaction arising from eating it. Eve’s hand moved. What moved it? The fruit? or the felt appetite and expected satisfaction? No, but Eve herself moved it. She was the self-moving, self-determining agent, who had power to put forth her hand, or power to forbear—who had power either to continue to look on the forbidden object of desire before her, and so to intensify the temptation—or to turn away her eyes from it and fix her thoughts on the command of her God—and thus to give the preponderating influence to whichever of the two objects (motives) she herself chose.

That the mind never acts without a motive, that is, without some intelligible *end* in view, is true; it would not be an intelligent mind, were it to act without a motive. But this does not constitute this motive or end the efficient cause (in the true sense of the term) of the mind’s action. Motives are but the occasion, not the cause of agency; ends so far desirable to be attained which the agent takes under review, but between which he makes the selection, and *determines himself* to move towards the attainment of the end chosen. By making motives that which originates the action of the mind, Edwards transforms

them into *Agents*, and the mind itself becomes a mere balance, or *motivo-meter*, for registering the comparative momentum of the motives brought to bear upon it.

Edwards, however, imagines that he has guarded against this objection by including under the term "motives" the desires and propensities of the mind itself—both the original nature of the particular mind, and the immediately preceding state into which it has been brought by the influence of previous motives, which modify considerably the influence of those now bearing upon it. This, however, does not alter in reality the merely mechanical character which he attributes to the mind and its volitions. Instead of a balance, the mind, according to this idea, may be likened to a more complex machine consisting of various levers, wheels, and other mechanical contrivances, all working into each other, the conjoint result of which, and the direction to which the action of the machine is determined in each particular case, being marked, we shall suppose, by an index hand pointed in that direction. It is manifest that the influence exerted by the motive forces brought to bear upon a particular part of the machine will be modified by its previous adjustment; besides that the effect produced by the same motive forces will vary according to the original construction, or nature, of each machine. Such is the spiritual piece of mechanism that Edwards conceives the human mind to be. If this machine is allowed to act freely, and to assume the direction which the motive forces immediately influencing it, modified by its own nature and its immediately preceding adjustment, determine, we do not see why he should hesitate to attribute to it "Freedom of Will," according to his definition of the term—and responsibility!

Every volition, according to Edwards, or determination of the mind, is the necessitated result of the motives applied, and of the preceding state of the mind; and again, that preceding state of mind is the result of a previous state modified by the motives that were applied to it, and so on in an ascending series, till we arrive at length at the original conformation of the mind as it came from the hand of its Creator; and since each succeeding

change on it with all the motives are linked together in one unbroken chain, which the human will, according to hypothesis has no power to alter or modify, but must necessarily follow, it is manifest that God must be responsible for the volitions and actions of every man, evil as well as good ; and that the man himself is no more responsible for the phenomena exhibited, than is a gun or any other piece of mechanism for the consequence of its movements.

Even Sir William Hamilton seems to have fallen into this mistake, of making motives the all in all to determine the will, in the following passage,\* (quoted by Mr. J. S. Mill,† the concession in which he duly avails himself of), where Sir William arguing against the true doctrine which had been stated by Dr. Reid, leaves out entirely the self-determining power of the mind to modify the influence of the motives presented, and concedes the indefensibility, in point of *argument*, of the position, which he is still for maintaining, of the Freedom of the Will.

According to Reid, the determination is made by the man and not by the motive. "But," asks Sir W. Hamilton, "was the *man* determined by no motive to that determination ? Was his specific volition to this or to that without a cause ? On the supposition that the sum of influences (motives, dispositions, and tendencies), to volition A, is equal to 12, and the sum of influences to counter-volition B equal to 8, can we consider that the determination of volition A should not be necessary?" Here, Sir W. Hamilton takes up exactly Edwards' conception of the mind as a complex *machine*; the direction assumed by which, in each particular instance, is necessarily determined by the nature of the machine and its previous adjustment, coupled with the motive forces that may be applied to it. He seems to be unable, for the time at least, to raise himself to the conception of its being possible for God to make a free-will *Agent*, that is, a being who could himself *originate* a volition. This appears clearly from the sequel of the quotation : "We can only conceive the volition B to be determined by supposing that the man *creates*

\* Foot-note to Reid's Works, Hamilton's Edition, p. 611.

† Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy, p. 498.

(calls from non-existence into existence), a certain supplement of influences. But this creation as actual, or in itself, is inconceivable, and even to conceive the possibility of this inconceivable act, we must suppose some cause by which the man is determined to exert it."

This is just Edward's self-refuting argument over again. "Nothing ever comes to pass without a cause. It is as repugnant to reason to suppose that an act of the will should come into existence without a cause, as to suppose the human soul, or an angel, or the globe of the earth, or the whole universe should come into existence without a cause."\* Well, we would ask, what caused the existence of the universe? It was an act of will, you answer, a volition of God. But what caused this volition? we must ask again, according to Edwards' theory. If the answer be, a previous volition; then following out his own oft-repeated argument, we have an infinite series of previous acts of will to account for each successive volition of the Creator. If he answers, God caused the act of His own will without any other cause of previous volition; even so, we say, God has made man in His own image, an *originating agent*, to the extent that he has a part in causing his own volitions (since we cannot refer those at least that are sinful to God).

But in order to show the confusion and difficulties in which we land ourselves by assigning to motives a definite invariable degree of force (which the mind cannot modify), and by attributing to them the origin of our volitions, let us again advert to the case in which *motives* alone (if Edwards' theory be correct), were concerned—in their proper specific sense as distinguished from what he mixes up with them, the character and state of the mind itself ("dispositions and tendencies," as Sir W. Hamilton calls them in the above extract). The elimination of these last will greatly simplify the question. The case alluded to is the first moral determination to which man came between conflicting motives, at the fall of our first parents. Here the character of Eve's mind and its previous state and bias can be completely

\* Edwards on Freedom of Will, Part ii., sect. iii., vol. i., p. 17. Ball, Arnold & Co.

set aside, since so far as these were concerned, coming as she did pure and unpolluted from the hands of her Creator, they would have led to the opposite result.

Two sets of motives were here presented to Eve's mind, the one by God, the other by Satan. Either then, first, the motives presented by God were the stronger; in which case, how came Eve to fall? Or secondly, the motives presented by Satan were the stronger; in which case, how can any blame or responsibility attach to Eve for yielding to them? The mind, according to Edwards and all Necessitarians, must follow the stronger motive. Unless we allow to Eve's mind a self-determining power, by which she could increase or diminish the force of either set of motives, by dwelling more on the one than on the other, she had no alternative but to follow the motives that were in themselves the stronger—in the instance before us, those tending to evil. To call this a trial or probation of our first parents, is a mere mockery; and the blame, if any, must attach to Him who permitted stronger motives to evil to be placed before Eve, than those He had Himself supplied to the good. If such be the only free agency attributed to man's will, it will be impossible to vindicate God's procedure in permitting moral evil to enter into His creation, or to continue for a moment to have place in it, since all He has to do is to present always to His intelligent creatures stronger motives to good than to evil, and all will be right.

The claim, however, for the mind of this self-determining power and partial control over motives, is not to be understood as involving the denial of the immense influence of these, and of the prevailing "dispositions and tendencies" of the mind itself, in guiding its choice. The limits are very narrow indeed, within which the will is permitted to diverge to the right or left. We all know the great power of habit which bye and by becomes almost a second nature, the all but irresistible potency of overpowering temptations, and the attractive influence of any object that appeals to our darling desires and propensities. If we strive to amend any prevailing evil tendency in ourselves or others, we know how difficult it is to weaken and eradicate it,

and it is only by slow degrees and repeated efforts that we can bring about any permanent change. If, therefore, we were thoroughly acquainted with a man's character and the motives presented to him, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, it would be possible to foresee with little risk of mistake the course he will take; and the older the individual is, and the more confirmed his character and habits, the more confidently may we calculate upon what will be his conduct. On the high degree of probability that can thus be attained, all our dealings with our fellowmen are founded. This is quite sufficient to explain the fact which Mr. J. S. Mill adduces as a strong proof of the Necessitarian hypothesis in the following, but slightly overcharged, statement—that we find by “experience, that volitions do, in point of fact, follow determinate moral antecedents with the same uniformity, and (when we have sufficient knowledge of the circumstances) with the same certainty, as physical effects follow their physical causes.” \* That they usually do, is granted; that they necessarily or invariably do so, is the very point in dispute. That the bias of the mind may be so strong, and the motives placed before it so overpowering, that the will is wholly unable to resist them—nay, so much so, that Almighty power must be invoked to overcome them—is true, and exactly what has been maintained in the former part of this Dissertation, in the case of the unregenerate before conversion. But even in this case, a modicum of independent self-acting power, however small, must be left, sufficient to render the man responsible for either taking, or refusing to take, the preliminary steps by which he will receive the necessary aid, and be enabled finally to emerge from his state of moral bondage, “into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

It is this independent self-determining power that Mr. J. S. Mill denies totally to man, and which the Duke of Argyll, in the following passage of his strictures on Mr. Mill's philosophy, in “The Reign of Law,” meant, we had fully hoped on first reading it, to claim for man. “Among the motives,” His Grace remarks,

\* Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy, p. 500.

"which operate upon him, man has a selecting power. He can, as it were, stand out from among them—look down from above upon them—compare them among each other, and bring them to the test of Conscience. Nay more, he can reason on his own character as he can on the character of another Being—estimating his own weakness with reference to this and the other motive, as he is conscious how each may be likely to tell upon him. When he knows that any given motive will be too strong for him if he allows himself to think of it, he can shut it out from his mind by 'keeping the door of his thoughts.' He can, and he often does, refuse the thing he sees, and hold by another thing which he cannot see. He may, and he often does, choose the Invisible in preference to the Visible. He may, and he often does, walk by Faith and not by Sight."

Here the noble author seemed to claim for man *power* in the true sense of the word, as distinguished from mere *force*—intelligent, self-acting, originating power—not, like all natural forces, necessarily and invariably determined in its movements by the antecedent conditions—but "a selecting power" over the motives presented to him—an independent "standing out from among them," and "looking down from above upon them"—nay, a power, not only of weakening, but of excluding any particular motive, as implied by the words, "when he knows that any given motive will be too strong for him, if he allows himself to think of it, he can *shut it out from his mind* by keeping the door of his thoughts."

But we regret to observe in what follows that he unconsciously gives up the whole question to Mr Mill, by his concession of "the *abstract possibility* of foreseeing mental action." "This," he says, "depends on the proposition that where *all* the conditions of mental action are constant, the resulting action will be constant also. But surely (he continues) this is not only true, but something very like a truism. There is nothing to object to or deny in the doctrine that if we knew *everything* that determines the conduct of a man, we should be able to know what that conduct will be. That is to say, *if* we knew *all* the motives

\* "The Reign of Law," by the Duke of Argyll, pp. 334-5.

which are brought by external things to bear upon his mind, and *if* we knew all the other motives which that mind evolves out of its own powers, and out of previously acquired materials, to bear upon itself; and *if* we knew the constitution of that mind so perfectly as to estimate exactly the weight it will allow to all the different motives operating upon it,—*then* we should be able to predict with certainty the resulting course of conduct.”\*

This appears at first sight very plausible. The “selecting power” of the will seems to be retained in the words, “*if* we knew all the other motives which the mind evolves out of its own power;” but it is immediately nullified by those which follow—“*if* we knew the constitution of that mind so perfectly as to estimate exactly the weight it will allow to all the different motives operating upon it.” The weight the mind will allow to all the different motives operating upon it is precisely what cannot be certainly known except by the *very act of the mind* in its making its determination, and therefore cannot be “estimated *exactly*” or “predicted with certainty” beforehand. In this last “*if*,” or condition of the author’s, there lurks still the subtle fallacy of Edwards, which it seems so hard to surmount, of attributing the determination of the mind’s action to the *motives* brought to bear upon it, conjoined with the *constitution* of the mind—and not to the mind itself—not to an independent, originating power which it possesses, that modifies and can at times supersede both. That he has fallen back into this pitfall His Grace indeed can no longer conceal. “The doctrine of our free will does not assign to the human mind any *self-originating* power.”† It is alone by denying to it this power that he can add, “Perfect knowledge must therefore be perfect foreknowledge. To know the present perfectly is to know the future certainly. To know all that is to know all that will be. To know the heart of man completely is to know his conduct completely also—for ‘out of the heart are the issues of life.’”‡

This is exactly Mr. Mill’s doctrine of the *abstract possibility* of

\* “The Reign of Law,” pp. 338-9.

† “Reign of Law,” p. 341.

\* “Reign of Law,” p. 340.

calculating the action of the Will, if the antecedent conditions were known. The error lies in the erroneous assumption that “*all* the conditions of mental action are *constant*.” The Duke forgets what he had before allowed, that a “variable quantity,” the Will—a “selecting power”—has been introduced among them, which baffles all *exact* calculation. High probability is attainable, but not certainty (by any finite mind). This will be clear from a simple illustration. Let us suppose all the other conditions necessary for blowing up a fort to have been duly prepared—the mine dug, the gunpowder laid, one end of the conducting wire placed in contact with it, and the other attached to the galvanic battery. But let us suppose the battery to be a *variable quantity*—that it possesses an independent “selecting power” of its own to excite, or to refuse to excite, the electricity as it pleases. It is evident that the abstract possibility of calculating with *certainty* the result would thus be excluded.

Is calculation then, it may be asked, or certain prediction altogether incompatible with freedom of will? No, we reply, at least as to *moral* actions; it is predicable of two very opposite classes: of “the spirits of the just made perfect,” and of the devils. And of both for the very same reason—because, their state of probation being passed, the variable element is now eliminated. Having each made their final election—the just, being “made perfect in holiness,” and kept unchangeable by the power of Christ, will follow ever the highest good; and the devils, having said to evil, “Be thou my good,” will follow as certainly the evil. But so long as men are in a state of *probation*, and may sink below, or rise above, the state in which the mind is at the present moment, *certain calculation* is impossible, in consequence of the presence of a variable element. As the character becomes more and more formed the probabilities rise higher; but not till life is ended can absolute certainty be attained by a finite being of the volitions of another, supposing all the elements of calculation to be known to him.\*

But, objects Mr. Mill (and this applies also to men still under probation), “All Theists must admit that God at least does at

\* See the remarks already made on this subject, p. 459.

each moment infallibly calculate the will's movement: they must admit, therefore, that it is, in the abstract, capable of calculation." Not of *calculation*—though of certain knowledge by the Infinite Mind. Here we come to the second of the two fundamental errors that have misled so many reasoners on this abstruse question of Predestination and Freewill. The fact is, as we have seen, that they cannot raise themselves to the conception of the possibility, even for God, to create a truly freewill being, possessed of a power of its own, so far independent as to be capable of *originating* an act that is its own—and not God's, nor the necessary result of any chain of sequences established by God—forgetting that sin is such an act. The second error is, that if such beings could exist, it would be impossible for God to know with infallible certainty what will be their act or choice in every instance, unless there be an invariable sequence, either causatively preordained by Him, or inherent in the very nature of things, between the antecedents and consequents in each individual instance. Into this error Edwards has fallen.\* Into this error a still greater mind fell—Calvin in his Institutes —where he says, "God foresees the things which are to happen, simply because He has decreed that they are so to happen."† The ground of the error consists, as has been observed, in confounding the *certainty* of all future events in God's mind with their *necessity* (p. 4, note.)

In no spirit of self-assertion then, but under a deep sense of the solemn responsibility under which the possession of such a trust lays us, it becomes us to vindicate for man a self-determining, independent power of will that can modify the influence of motives, and even, to some extent, act in opposition to its own predominant bias. In short, we must maintain, in opposition to Necessitarians and all upholders of "invariable sequence," that in contradistinction to mere *force*, which can neither restrain nor direct its movements, there is such a thing as *power*—an originating energy, that can act or forbear to act—that can, when it sees a fitting motive, that is, a desirable end to be at-

\* See Inquiry into the Freedom of the Will, Part ii., sec. xii.

† Institutio Relig. Christ. Lib. iii. xxiii. 7. See above, p. 52.

tained by its action, put forth of itself that action ; or if it sees two or more such ends or motives before it, can, at least when these are nearly equal, give the preference to one or other of its own proper motion. This idea (of *power*) we all have, and it is found in all languages. Whence is it derived ? From the Will, and from the Will alone and its acts. A mere mechanical *force* I feel that I am not, that must follow the motive forces operating upon me from without, and the internal character of the machinery devised for me by my Maker. Making full allowance for the great influence these exercise over me, and the narrow limits left for my freewill, I still know and feel that *I*—and this it is that constitutes my own proper self, or *Ego*—that I am an *Agent*, and responsible for my moving or not moving, and for the direction I give to my movements.

For the existence of this power within me, I appeal to the highest of all evidences, Consciousness. Mr. Mill, indeed, attempts to controvert this, but his arguments are far from satisfactory. First he takes a preliminary exception “to the use of the word consciousness in such an application. Consciousness,” he says, “tells me what I do or feel. But what I am *able* to do is not a subject of consciousness. Consciousness is not prophetic : we are conscious of what is, not of what will or can be.”\* Exactly so : consciousness assures me of the present—of my *present possession* of a power—in Mr. Mill’s own words, of what “I am able to do”—of a present, not of a future ability—“of what is” now, “not of what will or can be.” I feel or am conscious that I *am* capable of action. Mr. Mill has confounded between a *power now* felt, and the results that *will* or *can* proceed from that power. In confirmation he adds, “We should not know that we were capable of action at all, if we had never acted. Having acted, we know, as far as that experience reaches, how we are able to act.” This is merely, that experience brings out into consciousness the existence of a power *previously* within us, and of which our act is the result. We feel now, or are conscious of a power within us, to whose existence our attention was first directed by its exercise. Con-

\* Examination of Sir W. Hamilton, pp. 503-4.

sciousness, therefore, does assure us of the *present* possession of power.

Mr. Mill next controverts the assertion of Mr. Mansel,\* that "in every act of volition I am fully conscious that I can at this moment act in either of two ways, and that, all the antecedent phenomena being precisely the same, I may determine one way to-day and another way to-morrow." This assertion of Mr. Mansel's requires of course to be qualified. I have the *natural* ability of will in all cases to act in either of two ways; I have the *moral* ability, only provided that the motives and predominant bias of the will do not bear with overpowering influence in either way. Mr. Mill, however, denies the proposition totally, that we can know in any instance that we could have acted differently, all things considered, from what we did. "I ask my consciousness," he says, "what I do feel, and I find, indeed, that I feel (or am convinced) that I could have chosen the other course *if I had preferred it*; but not that I could have chosen one course while I preferred the other." And what is the instance that he selects in order to prove the truth of his assertion? Exactly one of those extreme cases, where the strongest motives and the predominant bias being involved lead with all but certainty to the one course chosen. "Take any alternative: say, to murder or not to murder!" Had he taken any common case of indifference, he could scarce have failed to see the erroneousness of his assertion. For instance, I know that at this moment I possess the power of moving my arm or leg; but by the same consciousness (or experience, if Mr. Mill will have it so), I know that, all the antecedents or conditions remaining the same, I can direct my arm to the right or to the left, that is "I can at this moment act in either of two ways"†—or can take two steps forward, or four, or six, or eight, as I please, determined by nothing but my own will; and if you deny it (like the practical answer given to the famed quibble of ancient times, "No man can move where he is; much less can he move where he is not; ergo, he cannot move at all,") I refute

\* "Prolegomena Logica," p. 152.

† Mill's *Examination of Hamilton*, p. 504.

Mr. Mill's sophism—by *moving*, and do all or any of these actions, and in any order that fancy directs, and with no other motive but *just to prove my ability*.

In moral actions it may be more difficult to find instances of indifference, where two or more modes of action appear equally good and right. Still there are many where the motives are nearly equally balanced, and where it depends on the individual's will to give the preponderance to the one side or the other, such as, whether he is to subscribe to a charitable fund, or to reserve the money for the wants of his own family; whether he is to grant a certain favour or assistance to a friend, where his own business or convenience interferes; whether a duty is to be done to-day, which may with little impropriety be postponed till to-morrow. On the decision taken in the daily recurring instances of this description depends in a great measure our probation—our moral advance or decline, according as we rise above, or fall below, the standard we have reached. We may strengthen—or we may diminish thus—our propensities to virtues or vice, and form habits that will in time become permanent and indelible for good or evil. In the possession of this power consists the possibility of self-discipline and of that “moral education,” which Mr. Mill will not deny, may be prosecuted by a man for himself (as well as by others for him, which alone he mentions), “by eradicating or weakening such of the desires and aversions as are likeliest to lead to evil; exalting to the highest pitch the desire of right conduct and the aversion to wrong; cultivating all other desires and aversions of which the ordinary operation is auxiliary to right, while discountenancing so immoderate an indulgence of them, as might render them too powerful to be overcome by the moral sentiment, when they chance to be in opposition to it.”\* But how can *I* “eradicate or weaken” my *present* prevailing “desires or aversions,” if my volitions are *wholly* determined for me by the motives presented to me by the *present* state of my mind—that is, by the bias given to it by these very desires and aversions—unless *I* possess some intrinsic independent power to change or modify them?

\* Mill's Examination of Hamilton, p. 505.

It is on the universal conviction that we possess such a power that all our criminal jurisprudence is founded. If this power is lost, which it may be temporarily, or sometimes permanently, to such an extent as to render the individual not responsible for his conduct—in so far as we believe the loss not to be incurred by any fault of his own, we exculpate him of all blame for any overt act committed during its continuance. Thus, in cases of lunacy or monomania, where a particular idea is borne in irresistibly on the mind of the person, no judge would convict him for any act committed under the influence of this irresistible idea. We should not blame a boy for any extravagance committed by him when in a state of intoxication, if we had satisfactory proof that he had been brought into that state by some malicious person without any knowledge or consent on his own part.

The theory we are discussing is no barren nor harmless speculation. Most dangerous and pernicious would be the consequences were a belief in this truth to become common—that we possess no *self-determining* power, but that our volitions are the necessary results of the bent of our minds, and of the motives that happen to be uppermost at the time. Let our youth once embrace this theory, and all remorse or self-accusation for any excess into which passion or appetite may hurry them will soon cease. Let the community generally adopt this theory, and with what consistency could a judge, who held this opinion, reprove or condemn for any crime a man who pleads, "You yourself know and must acknowledge that with the motives before me, and the state of my mind at the time, my conduct and choice could not possibly have been other than they were. If you say I ought previously to have restrained my evil propensities and not have allowed them to gain such mastery over me, you know as well as I that each successive state of mind is the necessary result of the preceding state, and unalterable by any effort of ours. Why, then, find fault with me for an act, which I could no more help, in the combination of circumstances in which I was placed, than could the ingredients of a barrel of gunpowder,

when combined together in certain proportions, help exploding when a lighted match is applied to them?"

What reply remains for our Necessitarian judge but the cynical retort, " *You* are necessitated to transgress, and *I* to punish, to furnish an additional motive, to keep you and others from repeating the offence!"

The most satisfactory guide, however, to the student out of the perplexities in which this subject has been involved will probably be found in the threefold division of the mental faculties, which is now very generally accepted as being the correct analysis of the human mind, and which shows distinctly in which department strict necessity prevails, and in which alone freedom is to be found.

According to this analysis, there are three cardinal faculties of the human mind, under one or other of which all mental phenomena may be classed, the *Intelligence*, the *Sensitivity*, and the *Will*. By means of these we *think*, we *feel*, we *act*. " All truths and facts, actual or conceivable, are comprehended within the thinking and perception of the first ; all sensations, emotions, desires, and passions belong to the second ; all doing or causation to the third."\*

The conclusions at which the first two arrive are necessitated : consequently call for neither praise nor blame. Every sane intellect that regards the same object in exactly the same light can arrive at only one conclusion. Where the premisses are precisely the same, there is but one logical inference to be drawn ; and no one ever thinks of attaching praise or blame to the conclusions of the *Intelligence*, regarded simply as such.

The same is true of the *Sensitivity*. Every object to which the attention of the *Intelligence* or *Perceptivity* is directed, when regarded in itself, and in one and the same point of view, has its appropriate emotion or sensation which it calls forth. This is equally true of the moral as of the natural sensibilities. Thus an act of injustice, simply viewed in itself as such, invariably calls forth indignant disapprobation in every mind, even the most depraved ; in proof of

\* Tappan's *Doctrine of the Will—applied to Moral Agency*, chap. i. 1.

which we need only state how keenly the wicked judge and resent any act of injustice which they consider directed against themselves. Every holy character, simply regarded in itself, even the wicked must esteem and admire. The Pharisees hated Jesus only as they hated God, because they regarded His holiness merely in the light of an obstacle to the attainment of their own worldly views. The movements, then, or manifestations of the Sensitivity are equally necessitated, and beyond our *direct* control, as those of the Intelligence. In both we feel ourselves entirely passive, powerless, and irresponsible. We cannot by any effort of ours judge an object to be different from what we perceive it to be, nor feel any other emotion than that which its contemplation necessarily calls forth.

But when we come to the consideration of the *Will*, a phenomenon altogether new and different presents itself. We are conscious of *power*, of an *agency* we possess ; and where different objects are presented to our Intelligence and Sensitivity, of a freedom in directing our attention and efforts to the one or to the other at pleasure—of a faculty therefore superior to, and capable of guiding indirectly our Intelligence and Sensitivity.

If it is asked, How do we come to the knowledge of this power, and of its freedom in its movements ? we reply, Exactly in the same way as we know that we possess Intelligence and Sensitivity, and that their movements are necessitated—by consciousness.

Let us recur to our former example. I see before me an apple. I consider its form and appearance. It is round, it is glossy, and “pleasant to the eyes.” I cannot, if I will, judge otherwise. I cannot by any effort judge it to be square, or rough, or unsightly.

Again, I fix my attention on the apple. I am sensible of an agreeable emotion excited in my mind by the sweet odour which it emits, and a desire to eat it is awakened. So long as my attention is directed to it, I cannot help feeling this desire or appetite. The Sensitivity clearly is passive under it.

Again, I fix my attention on the apple. The desire becomes

so strong that I put forth my hand, I pluck it, and eat. This forth-putting of power, this effort, this act, is a phenomenon altogether different from the two preceding. In those I felt myself altogether passive; in this, active. For the judgment passed, for the emotion felt, I neither praised nor blamed myself. They were involuntary, necessary, altogether beyond my control. Not so the effort I made in putting forth my hand. For this I feel I was responsible. I had the power to act, the power to forbear. True, the Will cannot act unless objects of action be given. I must have my Intelligence arrested, and my Sensitivity awakéned by an object before me, before my Will is excited to act; and if only one desirable object is before me, the Will is soon so strongly excited by the pleasurable emotion that the act of appropriation will follow certainly and innocently, where there is not, nor ought to have been, a counteracting object of desire. But supposing the apple not to be mine, or, as in the case of Eve, a forbidden fruit, there is here a competition between two conflicting objects of desire; and I feel that I have the power, and am responsible for its exercise, of making the choice between the two, and following the dictates either of appetite or of conscience.

*Direct* power over my Intelligence, over my Sensitivity, as has been said, I have none. But, *indirectly*, the Will has the power to regulate both. It can turn away the thoughts from one object of contemplation, and fix them more steadily upon another; and call up thus, by the latter object, a counteracting emotion to that excited by the other. The stake and fire, if contemplated continuously by the martyr as instruments of torture, must necessarily produce in him fear and a desire of shrinking from their endurance, and would quickly lead to the abjuration of his faith. But by a determined effort of will he can turn away his mind from the stake to the Saviour—from the immediate sufferings, to the crown prepared for those that suffer for His name; and by these higher and heavenly motives overpowering the grosser and earthly, he is enabled cheerfully to endure the death appointed him, because he regards it no longer in the light of a punishment, but as the means of attaining to the highest glories of heaven.

From the analysis of the mind now given it will be seen,

1. That *necessity* rules in two of its faculties, and that *freedom* is found only in the third.

2. The fallacy will be evident that is committed in ascribing the movements of the Will to Motives as their cause, as if a MOTIVE were *literally*, and not merely figuratively, that which moves and determines the Will.

In all three divisions of the Mind, the Intelligence, and Sensitivity, as well as the Will, an *object* is required for their excitement. In the instance that has been given, the apple was the object that called forth the movement of the Intelligence, of the Sensitivity, and of the Will. But in all three, the object itself, the apple, was passive. The movement proceeded not from the apple, but *towards* the apple. It was *towards* the apple that the judgment of the Intelligence was directed, *towards* the apple that the desire of the Sensitivity pointed, *towards* the apple that the action of the Will put itself forth. The Intelligence it was that judged, the Sensitivity that felt, the Will that acted or moved. The object towards which the Will moved (though in this latter case called the MOTIVE) is in reality, as in the case of the first two faculties, but the *occasion*, not the *cause*, of its movements.

Again, as the Will is that which determines the movements of the Intelligence and the Sensitivity, by its power of directing the attention of the mind to this or to that object, and fixing it longer upon one than another, the Will must be regarded as the *regulating, moving, and determining* power of the whole mind.

"The Will," says Mr. Tappan, "is the faculty of choice and volition, or creativeness, just as Reason (Intelligence) is the faculty of knowledge. It is just as comprehensible how the Will can originate choice and volition, as how the Reason and Sensitivity can develop knowledges and emotions. The relation of cause and effect is just as comprehensible as the relation of substance and attributes." \*

\* "Tappan On the Will, Part III., Moral Agency," p. 3. To the reader who wishes to prosecute this subject farther, these Treatises are recommended as well worthy of perusal.

*Will, Mind, Spirit* is that cause (in the highest sense of the term, viz., *originating, efficient cause*), and the only source of Power in the true sense of the word, as distinguished from mere insensate Force. For the subject under discussion, it is of the utmost importance to distinguish clearly between these two ideas—between *Power* as belonging to Mind alone, and *Force* as belonging to Body or Matter.

FORCE is unintelligent, involuntary, necessary—incapable of either originating or repressing its movement or action, or of determining its time, energy, or direction.

POWER is intelligent, voluntary, free—capable of either originating or repressing its action, and of determining its time, energy, and direction.

To mix up these two very opposite ideas, as Professor Bain does in his Philosophy, must lead to confusion. Thus in the opening pages of his work on the Senses and the Intellect,\* he tells us that “Eating, running, flying, sowing, building, speaking, are operations rising above the play of feeling. They all originate in some feelings to be satisfied, which gives them the character of proper *mental* actions. When an animal tears, masticates, and swallows its food, hunts its prey, or flees from danger, the stimulus or support of the activity is furnished by its sensations or feelings. To this feeling-prompted activity, we give the name *Volition*.” Here we have confusion between two things of very different characters—between the volitional acts of the body, that is, of matter, of a machine—and the volitional acts of the mind that *directs* the action; or (to borrow the author’s own illustration) between the “Steam-engine” and the Engineer who directs it. The volitional movement of the body has indeed an intimate connection with the volitional act of the mind (a connection, however, far too subtle for us to comprehend), but they are so entirely distinct that the one may take place without the other. For instance, I may have put forth an effort of will to raise my arm, and yet find it paralyzed; or, as happened to an esteemed friend of my own, who had been out several hours fishing in a lake seated in a small skiff, when he attempted to

\* “The Senses and the Intellect,” by Alexander Bain, LL.D., p. 4.

rise, he found himself totally unable—having, without being aware of it, been struck with paralysis of the lower limbs. The volitional effort of the will, however, was as distinctly put forth by him as on any former occasion, although it was no longer followed by any corresponding muscular movement.

The failure on the part of Professor Bain to discriminate between these two very distinct acts of the mind and of the body is the more remarkable, since he elsewhere uses an illustration which suggests the distinction between them. Combating the popular idea that it is an effort put forth by the *Will* that enables “the field labourer who goes out in the morning to plough a field,” to execute his work, Dr. Bain justly maintains that “a large expenditure of muscular and nervous energy, derived in the final resort from his well digested meals and healthy respiration, is the true source, the veritable antecedent of all that muscular power” put forth by him. “It is now-a-days a truism to compare a living animal with a steam-engine, as regards the source of the moving power. What the coal by its combustion is to the engine, the food and the inspired air are to the living system.”\* We have here the immediate source of the unintelligent material force. But of what avail would this be to the cultivation of the field without the intelligent power of the field labourer’s mind to *direct* all its movements? Or of what use would be the force of the steam for the locomotive, without the controlling will of the engineer to regulate it, to let it on and off at the appropriate times, and to direct every movement of the engine? The only stimulants or directors of the volitional movements of the body which Dr. Bain seems to contemplate are “the sensations or feelings” of the animal, which he makes to move and direct the will, instead of their being regulated by the will. “The nervous system,” he observes, “may be compared to an organ with bellows constantly charged, and ready to be let off in any direction, according to the particular keys that are touched. The stimulus of our sensations and feelings . . . . determines the manner and place of the discharge.”† But our

\* “The Emotions and the Will,” by Alexander Bain, M.A., p. 434, 2nd edition, omitted in the 3rd.      † Bain on “The Senses and the Intellect,” p. 304.

sensations and feelings (as has been shown) possess no *self-determining* power of their own, but are themselves wholly dependent on the objects to which the attention of the mind is directed. The human being, if we adopt Dr. Bain's view, would resemble a steam-coach, which, if we might suppose it, in addition to the propelling power of the steam, to be also a large magnet, would shape its course according as it was attracted or repelled by the different poles of the magnets it chanced to meet in its path. Unless we will allow to the mind itself a self-originating, regulative power, man is but a machine, the sport of circumstances, and of the accidental sensations and feelings, pleasurable or painful, called forth at the moment. At best, Professor Bain's theory can apply only to one of the lower animals, guided solely by its instincts and the mere impulses of sense, or to a human being, when reduced by fatuity or disease to the level of a mere animal. But it leaves wholly out of account that higher power in man (as being "made in the image of God") by which he can *control* the feelings and propensities of his animal nature; and looking to the things that are unseen and eternal, and feeling his relation to an invisible and holy God, can, under the influence of God's Spirit, choose and follow out a path far exalted above the sphere of bodily sight and sense.\*

But fortunately for man's sense of responsibility, we are placed above all mystifications of philosophy on this subject. Stronger than all reasoning, we know and feel that we have a power to choose—to act, or to forbear to act, within certain limits. The common sense of all mankind, the languages of all nations, attest this fact. All have the idea, the word—POWER. Whence did they derive this? Not from external nature, or the observation of material or bodily forces, for these (all agree) possess

\* Mind and Body, according to Professor Bain's latest idea (see "Mind and Body"), he would seem to regard as the two sides of one and the same thing. This involves a logical contradiction. A thing cannot *be* and *not be* at one and the same time. Mind *has power*, matter *has no power*, to restrain or begin action or motion. Mind and Body, therefore, may be and are most intimately united; but one and the same thing, or the two sides of one and the same thing they are not, since a thing cannot both *have power* and *not have power*.

no *voluntary, elective* POWER, but observe the most rigid, unbending laws. It is from the mind alone, from what takes place within ourselves, that we derive this idea of self-originating, self-directing Power, which, in conjunction with the sense of right and wrong implanted in our natures by God, impresses us with the ineradicable conviction that we are accountable beings, and that on the election, which our Will possesses the power to make in this our state of probation, depends our eternal happiness or misery in a future world.

The importance of vindicating the equity of the divine government and the responsibility of man must plead excuse for the length to which these observations have run. The times are changed. Time was when in opposition to Pelagian and Arminian error, the side of truth needful to be enforced was the all-pervading ordination of God, and the all-effecting power of His Spirit in regeneration. But now that the pendulum of public opinion has swung in the opposite direction, now that Ultra-Predestinarianism (or in plainer terms *Fatalism*, which would bind all mental and moral movements under the same iron necessity as the invariable sequences in the material world) has become a favourite doctrine of our philosophers, and is unconsciously conceded even by some of the friends of revelation: the truth requiring specially to be pressed seems to be, while we still maintain, in the most decided manner, the certain fore-knowledge and foreordination of all things by God—that yet “thereby no violence is offered to the *will* of the creatures, nor is the *liberty* or *contingency* of second causes taken away, but rather established.”

The discussion of the subject we have been considering would be incomplete without an explanation of Romans ix., which has ever been the stronghold of Hyper-Calvinism. It is one of the triumphs of Parallelism that it has resolved all the difficulties connected with one of the darkest passages of the Bible, and relieved God’s word from the charge of ascribing to Him a character, in His dealings with His creatures, against which the moral instincts which He Himself has implanted in our nature revolt.

By Parallelism (let me briefly explain to those who are not aware of the extent to which it influences the composition of the whole of scripture), I mean not merely the correspondence of line to line discovered by Bishop Lowth, according to which "things answer to things, and words to words, as if fitted to each other by a kind of rule or measure". This the Bishop considered to be the peculiar characteristic of Hebrew poetry. But Bishop Jebb \* afterwards showed that the same parallelism of members was to be found in many passages of the New Testament, grouping together several lines into paragraphs or stanzas in such a manner, that the comparison suggested by the similarities or antitheses in the corresponding lines throws much light on each other, and on the connection and meaning of the whole paragraph. The author in two works † attempted to show that the habit thus induced in the Hebrew mind, of systematic, yet discriminating thought and symmetrical arrangement of ideas, did not long rest satisfied with a parallelism of lines merely in a paragraph, but soon extended to a parallelism of paragraph with paragraph, connecting closely together the successive links in the chain of argument, until at length it found complete gratification only when it embraced the entire composition, so as to combine its various parts into one organic whole.

Such a composition I have shown the Epistle to the Romans to be, and by the aid of the principles of Parallelism have been enabled to resolve all the principal difficulties of the Epistle. I cannot too earnestly impress upon all young students, who desire to search the Scriptures for themselves intelligently, the value of this most important instrument of investigation. Without a knowledge of Parallelism it is all but impossible to discover the depth and pregnancy of meaning of much of Scripture, e.g., of the Ten Commandments; and from ignorance of its principles the leading doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans, as contained in the central passage (v. 12-21) has been missed, *τὸ χάρισμα* (verse 15), and *τὸ δῶρον* (verse 16),

\* Jebb's Sacred Literature.

† The Symmetrical Structure of Scripture; and Analytical Commentary on the Romans: by Rev. John Forbes, LL.D.: T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh.

hopelessly and inevitably confounded, and chapter ix. interpreted so as to make St. Paul stultify and contradict himself and all his preceding argument. For—

1. St. Paul had in the former part of the Epistle laboured to bring home sin to the individual consciences of his countrymen by an appeal to “the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds,” &c., (ii. 5, 6), in order, thereby, to awaken them to the necessity of giving up their unbelief and resistance to the gospel. But now, it seems, in chap. ix., he undoes the whole effect of his former appeals to their consciences, by furnishing them with a ready-made excuse for their unbelief, in the predestinating decree of God, which doomed them unconditionally to this rejection of Christ, and rendered any and every effort on their part to believe unavailing.

Could a more complete defence for the worst abuses of the doctrine of Predestination be devised, or a more plausible excuse be furnished to the sinner for casting off all blame and responsibility from himself for his wickedness and unbelief?

2. By the prevalent interpretation, St. Paul is made to adopt the very line of reasoning, with one modification, pursued by his opponents. The Jews were all high Predestinarians, and maintained that they were God’s predestinated people, elected unconditionally to all the blessings of God’s covenant. “We,” they argue, “are the Isaac, the Jacob, whom God hath chosen, while all others are represented by the rejected Ishmael and Esau. And it is vain to argue that our unfaithfulness has forfeited our privileges. Our election is unconditional, wholly independent of merit or demerit, good or evil on our part, as was shown in the case of God’s choice of our father Jacob in place of Esau: for before the children were born, or had done good or evil, it was said to Rebecca, ‘Two *nations* are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger,’ Gen. xxv. 23—a prophecy by its very terms referring not merely to the children as individuals, but to their seed as nations; as is

further evident from the words of Malachi i. 2-4, ‘I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid *his mountains* and *his heritage* waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas *Edom* saith,’ &c.”

Such, evidently, were the favourite arguments by which the Jews supported their principle of the unconditional Predestination of their nation, and from which it had passed into a maxim, **כל־ישראל לְעֹלָם חֶלְקָה יִשְׁלַח** “All Israel have their portion in the world to come.”

St. Paul, it seems, endorses the whole argument, with this sole exception, that not the *whole* nation was thus unconditionally elected, but only a *part*. But the *principle* is fully admitted, that eternal salvation and reprobation in no way depend on the act or will of man, or anything that he can either do or forbear, but solely on the predestinating decree of God. All probation of man, and responsibility on his part, are thus at an end.

To this it has been replied, that according to a habit of St. Paul of “INSULATING the one view of the subject under consideration with which he is at the time dealing,”\* the *human* side (man’s free-will and responsibility), is here kept out of sight, and the *Divine* side (God’s sovereignty and unconditional predestination) alone insisted on, while at other times “we shall find that free-will asserted strongly enough for all edifying purposes”.† A distinction of much importance has been here overlooked. The assertion of two truths which *we may be unable to reconcile* is one thing; the assertion of two *irreconcilable*, because logically contradictory, propositions (*i.e.*, where the very terms of the one proposition contradict and exclude the other), is another and very different thing. Of the former we have an example in the case of God’s justice and mercy in the justification of sinners; the reconciliation of which, though human reason could not discover the mode, till revealed by the gospel, it could not pronounce to be impossible or to involve self-contradiction. But the view given of God’s sove-

\* Dean Alford’s Greek Test., Argument of Rom. ix.

† Ibid., Comment on ix., 16.

reignty by the prevalent interpretation of this passage, entirely excludes the idea of any *responsibility* or probation on the part of man, since it makes God *causatively* to predetermine not only the privileges and opportunities to be granted to different men, but *the use which each is to make of them*. The Divine side here is all in all. The human is entirely excluded. All free-will on man's part, as conducing to his everlasting destiny, is denied by this representation. Previously to any capability of this, and irrespectively of any foreseen act or choice of His creature, God determines the destiny of each, and all the steps leading to the final result—*loves one, and hates another*—hates him, therefore, as a *creature*, not a *sinner*—hardens him, not (*observe*) *judicially*, but *before he has done good or evil*.

We put it to any candid mind, Can such a representation of the infinitely holy, righteous, and loving Father of all, with whom is no respect of persons, be possibly correct? Must there not be some lurking fallacy in the interpretation and reasoning, which land us, inextricably, in such a conclusion?

We are thus compelled to seek for another interpretation.

Here the benefits of Parallelism will be seen as a guide to the interpreter. For—

I. No sooner did the correspondence of the lines mark off the paragraphs than it *became* apparent that the cases of the pairs of children, in verse 7-9, and those in 10-13, were parallel. The first case, almost all commentators agree, is *typical*; the second, to be consistent, must be *typical* also. Both cases teach that *all* the children of Abraham are not thereby heirs of God's spiritual promises, but that He chooses out freely whom He will. Of the *outward* promises made to Abraham (the earthly inheritance of Canaan, and the carnal descent of the Saviour from his seed) Isaac was chosen as the heir and not Ishmael; Jacob, and not Esau: clearly typifying, that the heirs of God's *spiritual* promises are appointed of His own free pleasure, on a principle of selection of His own, independently of all fleshly descent.

What that principle is, and what entitles to the privilege of being spiritually sons and heirs of God, is farther indicated in two of its aspects by each of these instances.

By the 1st (verse 7-9, especially 8) is typified that, as not Ishmael born by the natural power of the flesh, but Isaac born by the power of God's promise, became heir of the *external* Messianic privileges; so with regard to the internal and spiritual blessings, not the children of the flesh (like Ishmael), but those supernaturally born by faith on God's promise (like Isaac) are heirs.

By the 2nd instance (verse 10-13, especially 11) is indicated that merit or demerit previous to *spiritual* birth, makes no difference in God's election of the heirs of the eternal covenant. This is clearly shown in the type of Jacob and Esau, antecedently to whose corporeal birth, before they could have done either good or evil, the preference to the blessings of the *temporal* covenant was given to the younger above the elder ("The elder shall serve the younger"), and openly manifested in the history of their respective seeds ("Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated").

Here we see the true meaning of the objection which the Apostle knew would immediately start to the lips of a Jew. "What shall we say then, is there *unrighteousness* with God?" (ver. 14), and which has been so strangely misunderstood, as if it referred to God's electing arbitrarily some to everlasting life, and reprobating others according to His good pleasure, in place of His purposing to treat all alike, according as they accepted or rejected His offers of mercy. "What!" they were ready to exclaim, "are we, so long the servants of the Lord, and depositaries of God's holy law, to be put on a level with the idolatrous Gentiles in reference to the privileges of Messiah's kingdom!" The type showed that antecedently to spiritual birth or regeneration, comparative merit or demerit could make no distinction in giving a title to blessings which proceeded solely from God's free grace and mercy. Be it that all other nations were polluted "sinners of the Gentiles," as the Jews termed them, and that they, the Jews, were so superior in righteousness as they fancied themselves, still this gave them no claim to justification before God. Let them beware, lest the very self-righteous claim which they thus set up might place them below the more

humble Gentiles, and realize in them the type that "the elder (brother, the Jew) should serve the younger" (the Gentile).

II. A second point that the parallelism made clear by the comparison which it obliges the student to institute between the corresponding parts of an argument, was the utter impossibility that St. Paul could so thoroughly contradict the whole tenor of his previous argument as he is made to do by the usual interpretation. If there is any point on which St. Paul was more full and explicit than another, it is the perfect impartiality of God's *judicial* treatment of all, Jew and Gentile, in rendering to every man alike (ii. 6); "with God there is no respect of persons" (ii. 11). "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?" (iii. 29). In respect of the Gospel offers all were placed on an equal footing, "seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith" (iii. 30). Could St. Paul so entirely forget himself as to turn in chap. ix. directly round on his own argument, and to claim for God a right in His judicial dealings arbitrarily to show favour to one and disfavour to another, irrespectively of whatever they did? Here a new light broke in upon me. The very reverse must be the truth which he inculcates, viz., perfect *equality* and *impartiality* in the treatment of all wherever man's responsibility is concerned. While God giveth no account of His matters in what He is free to give or withhold, but dealeth to every man severally as He wills—in His *judicial* proceedings He ever acts with perfect equity and impartiality to all in exactly equal circumstances, reserving however to Himself the judgment how far these circumstances differ or not.

If therefore He chose Jacob and rejected Esau before for good reasons, He is not bound to show partiality to Jacob, as the Jews misinterpreted Malachi's words (Mal. i. 2, 3), and to continue His choice of the race when they refuse the Gospel-salvation offered to all on the one equal condition of faith, but must deal *equally* with Jews and Gentiles according to their acceptance or rejection of the terms (Rom. ix. 10-13). If He showed mercy to the Jews when sinners, guilty of flagrant idolatry at Sinai, He may equally show mercy to the Gentiles, nay must, if the

circumstances call for it, of which He alone is the proper judge (ver. 15, 16). If He hardened Pharaoh's heart because he persistently hardened himself against Him, He may, nay must, equally harden judicially the hearts of you Jews, if you continue to resist obstinately all His gracious solicitations (verse 17, 18). If by Hosea (i. 10, ii. 23) He foretold your present rejection as His people, yet His future gracious reception of you when you turn unto Him, how much more may He now take to Himself as His people the less guilty Gentiles ? (verse 25, 26).

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#### SHORT ANALYTIC COMMENTS TO SHOW THE TRAIN OF ARGUMENT.\*

Ver. 1.—3. St. Paul expresses his deep sorrow for the rejection of his countrymen from Christ's salvation, and his readiness to make any sacrifice, however great, could it but procure their repentance and admission into Christ's kingdom.

The Jews maintained that it would amount to a denial, I., of their privileges; II., of God's truth; III., of God's righteousness, if they were excluded from the blessings of Christ's kingdom, and the "sinners of the Gentiles" admitted. "We (they urged) are God's *elect* people, *predestinated unconditionally* to these blessings. God's word is pledged for their fulfilment, and no unfaithfulness on our part can make His word void. To these objections the apostle replies.

I. Objection. That the *privileges* of the Jews would be made void.

Ver. 4, 5.—What applies to the greatest of these privileges—viz., that the Christ is yours only "as concerning the flesh" (ver. 5), is true of all the others. You are God's "*elect*" people. But elected to what? To be God's *outward* people—"predestinated"? to typical privileges. You are (ver. 4) ISRAELITES, with all their privileges. But the carnal Israel only typified the *spiritual* (ver. 6.), the outward adoption, the *true* adoption of the children of God, &c. Yours are the FATHERS (ver. 5), to each of whom

\* For fuller exposition the reader is referred to the Commentary.

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ROMANS IX.

## IN PARALLELISTIC ARRANGEMENT.

1. I say the truth in Christ, I lie not,  
My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,
  2. That I have great heaviness,  
And continual sorrow in my heart.
  3. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ  
For my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh;
- 
4. Who are ISRAELITES ;  
To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the  
covenants,  
And the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the  
promises ;
  5. Whose are the FATHERS ;  
And of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,  
Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

it was promised, "In thy *seed* shall all the families of the earth be blessed." But this ensured not that the Christ should be yours except "as concerning the flesh," nor that you should be more than the *carnal* seed of Abraham.

### II. Objection.—That God would be *untrue* to His promises.

The Jews maintained that "*all* Israel has a part in the world to come," and in the spiritual blessings of Christ's kingdom; founding—1, On their carnal *descent*; 2, On their *works* and superior *merit*, as compared with the Gentiles. The first is refuted in both ver. 7-9 and 10-13, the second in 10-13 (specially in ver. 11.)

Ver. 6.—God's promise is not made void. They are "**ISRAELITES**," ver. 4, but all are not Israel spiritually who spring from Israel naturally.

Ver. 7-13.—Theirs are the "**FATHERS**," ver. 5; but descent from these ensures not to all even the *temporal* promises, which were allotted according to God's free pleasure; proved from Isaac, not Ishmael—Jacob, not Esau, being chosen to inherit them; the former case (ver. 7-9) typifying that with regard to the *spiritual* promises, not the children of the flesh (like Ishmael), but those supernaturally born by faith on God's promise (like Isaac) are heirs, the latter case (ver. 10-13) typifying (in addition), that as the *outward* privileges promised previously to natural birth, so the *spiritual* blessings are bestowed of God's free grace and purpose, irrespectively of all merit or demerit, previous to spiritual birth; and that as God showed love to Jacob and his seed, and rejected Esau and his seed, so now He may choose the Gentiles, the ~~younger~~ son, and reject the Jews, the elder brother.

### III. Objection.—That God would be *unrighteous* in His judgments—1, in showing mercy to the Gentiles (answered in ver. 15, 16); 2, in rejecting the Jews (answered in ver. 17). [Such would be the obvious objection to ver. 11-13, which would immediately occur to a Jew. "What! no regard paid to previous merit or demerit? For surely we, God's people and worshippers, deserve more than idolatrous Gentiles!"]

6. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect.  
For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel :
7. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they  
all children ;  
But " In Isaac shall thy seed be called :"  
That is, They which are the children of the flesh,  
These are not the children of God ;  
But the children of the promise  
Are counted for the seed.
8. For this word is one of promise,  
"At this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son."
9. And not only this; but when Rebecca also  
Had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac ;  
For the children being not yet born,  
Neither having done any good or evil,  
That the purpose of God according to election  
might stand,
10. Not of works, but of Him that calleth,
11. nor works avail.
12. It was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger,"  
As it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."
13. 14. What shall we say then ?  
Is there unrighteousness with God ? God forbid.

1. (ver. 15, 16). Why not show mercy to the Gentiles, as He did to you Israelites, when guilty of idolatry and rebellion against Him at Sinai? (Exod. xxxiii. 19.)—mercy to sinners being of God's free grace, not to be extorted by any desires or efforts of men.

2. (ver. 17). Why not judicially harden you Jews for your perverseness, as He did to Pharaoh whom He placed on the throne of Egypt, as a fitting instrument, by his proud self-willed opposition to His commands, to execute God's very plans, and to make His power and name conspicuous in his defeat and destruction? (ver. 17). So that God Himself (ver. 18) is the only competent judge who are proper objects of mercy, and who of severity.

Further Objection (ver. 19).—If God hardens men, and has mercy just as He wills: if all is according to His “determinate counsel and foreknowledge” (see Acts ii. 23, where on the same plea the crucifiers of the Lord would have been blameless), and our very wickedness is made to subserve His purposes, why find fault with what is only working out His irresistible will?

Answer 1 (ver. 20, 21).—If you take your stand on God's *right* (ver. 14), I appeal to *right* too. What impiety in sinful man to question the acts of the sovereign Maker of all, who surely out of the corrupted mass of humanity has a right to make and unmake as He pleases? \*

\* For further remarks on the connection of verses 18-21, see before in  
pp. 48, 49.

15. For He saith to Moses, [Ex. xxxiii. 19.]  
 "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,  
 And I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."
16. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,. [Jews]  
 But of God that showeth mercy. [Gentiles]
17. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, [Exod. ix. 16]  
 "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up,  
 That I might show My power in thee,  
 And that My name might be declared throughout all the earth."
18. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, [Gentiles]  
 And whom He will He hardeneth. [Jews]
- 
19. Thou wilt say then unto me,  
 "Why doth He yet find fault ?  
 For who resisteth His will ?"
- 
20. Nay but, O man,  
 Who art thou that repliest against God ?  
 Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it,  
 Why hast thou made me thus ?
21. Hath not the potter power over the clay,  
 Out of the same lump,  
 To make one vessel unto honour, [Gentiles]  
 And another unto dishonour ? [Jews]

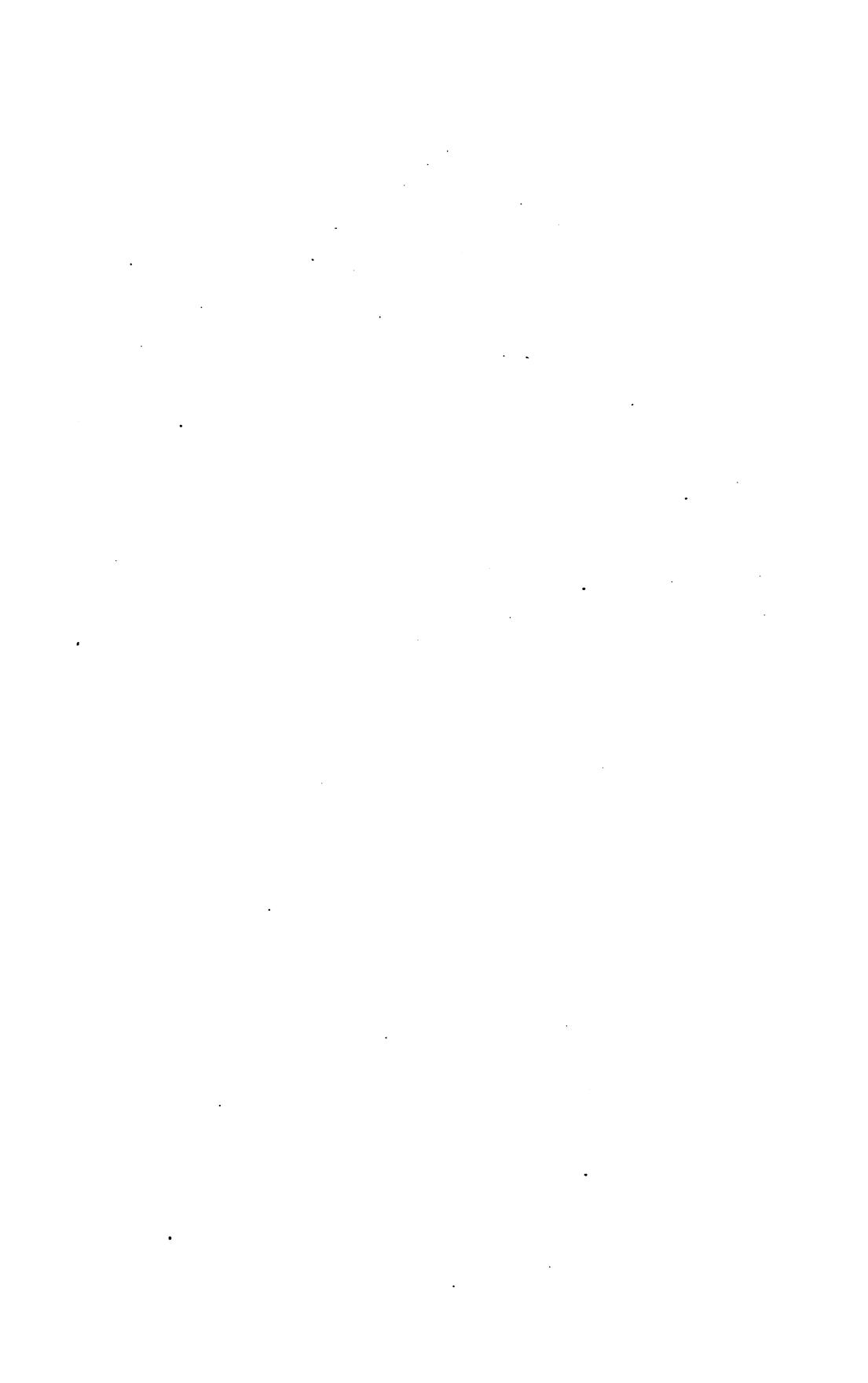
Answer 2 (ver. 22-29).—But what *justice* requires is one thing, what God's *mercy* prompts Him to do is another. Not then to appeal to God's sovereign right, of which He needs to render account to none—looking to what we can see, if He has long borne with you, “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” [*by yourselves, κατηρτισμένα*], (His very forbearance being the occasion of hardening you to be more conspicuous objects of His avenging power), and shows mercy to the Gentiles and remnant of the Jews, whom “*He* has prepared unto glory” (*ἀ προητοίμασεν*), what objection lies to His righteousness?

Ver. 25, 26.—That God would show mercy to the undeserving was long ago intimated by the prophets, when they predicted the Jews' present apostacy, and yet God's future reception of them (Hos. i. 10, ii. 23). *A fortiori*, with how much greater reason may He now compassionate the less guilty Gentiles?

Ver. 27-29.—That Israel, so highly favoured, would yet for their abuse of privileges be sharply dealt with, was no less distinctly foretold.

Note, that in the parallelistic arrangement (22-29) the comment on “Whom He will He hardeneth” is placed first (ver. 22), and last (ver. 27-29), in order to make the warning to the Jews more prominent; while that on “He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy,” with reference to the Gentiles, is placed more obscurely in the middle (ver. 23-26.)





## APPENDIX.

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In the hurry of passing these pages through the press, I have had no time to read and weigh, as I could have desired, the opinions expressed by so many eminent men in the *Contemporary* on the Eternity of Punishment. As to the *direction* in which alone, as it would appear, Scripture allows a ray of hope to enter, I would beg to refer the reader to what has been already said in the note to page 20; and as to the possible *extent* of the remedy, to meditation on such a passage as Philip. ii. 10, where no limit would seem to be set to the all-subduing victory of love promised to the "self-emptying" sacrifice of the Son of God, "that *in\** the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth." If all but infinite appears to be the hardening power of sin and abused free will, does it transcend the infinitude of divine love? But on a theme like this the word of God alone must speak, and I feel constrained to point out how baseless and dangerous would seem the hope, which several of these writers appear to countenance, of some further probation being granted in the intermediate state between death and the Judgment. The chief, if not the sole foundation for this idea is the interpretation they put upon what is said in 1 Pet. iii. 19, of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison. To this interpretation the objections are formidable.

1. To found a doctrine of such importance on one, and that a very obscure passage, is precarious.

2. The general tenor of Scripture leads to the belief that probation ends with this life. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). Our Lord's representation, though in a parable, of the rich man and Lazarus, must surely be in accordance with truth, that "there is a great gulf fixed between" the two classes in Hades which none can

\* *ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι*, denoting a heartfelt submission. See Canon Lightfoot, in l.

pass. Yet, unless Christ's supposed preaching in Hades was vain, some succeed in passing the gulf.

But 3. The interpretation put on this passage is inconsistent with the context.

I can but very briefly give here my view of this difficult passage. I premise:

I. The two passages, iii. 19, and iv. 6, as all agree, refer to the same subject, and if it is shown that the argument imperatively requires that those mentioned in iv. 6 were *alive* when "the gospel was preached to them that are *dead* [now only, when St. Peter writes]—then were those *alive* to whom it is said Christ "went and preached," though now "spirits in prison."

II. Note St. Peter's habit of tracing the inspired utterances of men to their divine source. The prophets (literally) spoke the words, but with St. Peter it is "the *Spirit of Christ* which was in them that testified beforehand" (ii. 11. Comp. 2 Pet. i. 21). Accordingly here—as St. Paul in Eph. ii. 17 says that "Christ came and preached (viz., by His apostles) to you which were afar off and to them which were nigh"—so St. Peter, in iii. 19, says, "unto the spirits that are in prison\* Christ went and preached when disobedient† in time past, what time the longsuffering of God was waiting in the days of Noah."

The argument is this:—St. Peter is exhorting the disciples (iii. 17) to "suffer for well doing," even though it should be unto death, because *death in the flesh* is *quicken<sup>ing</sup> in the spirit*. This he illustrates and enforces by the example of Christ, who "being put to death as to the flesh," was thereby "quickened as to the Spirit," and made now a "quicken<sup>ing</sup> Spirit," to all who receive Him" (ver. 18). Having proved this in the intermediate

\* Observe the position of *τοῖς ἵν φύλακγ πνεύμασιν*, marking, by their being placed *first* (before the verbs) their *present* state, as contrasted with that "in time past," *ποτε*, when Christ preached to them by Noah.

† *ἀπειθήσασιν*, not as generally rendered, "who were disobedient," which after *τοῖς ἵν φύλακγ πνεύμασιν* would have been *τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν*, but "when they were disobedient," see Winer's Grammar of New Test. Greek, p. 432b, translated by Rev. W. F. Moulton. Besides, the participle is separated from its noun and placed after *ἰκέντιζεν*, forming therefore with it part of the predicate—"He went and *preached to them when disobedient*," not when they were "spirits in prison."

verses (19-22), the apostle calls on the disciples to be ready to suffer with Christ if need be unto death, that they may receive like beneficial effects in the quickening of their spirits (iv. i., in words closely corresponding to iii. 18.)

In the intermediate verses (iii. 19-22) accordingly, we expect to find the proof of the by no means obvious proposition, that Christ's Spirit received so great an accession of quickening power by His submission to death. This proof St. Peter supplies by contrasting, in verse 19, 20, the comparative weakness of saving power which Christ's Spirit *in time past*, *ποτε*, imparted to the baptismal waters of the Flood in cleansing the old world from the pollution of sin—with the greatly enhanced power imparted to the water of Christian baptism (verse 21-22), by which “He is *now* saving you”; Jesus baptising the Christian world “with the Holy Spirit and fire”. (Mat. iii. 2.)

*Then* (verse 19, 20) by His Spirit (or *in*, *ἐν* *φ*, speaking by His servant Noah as “a *preacher of* righteousness, *the eighth person*” saved, 2 Peter ii. 5), “unto the spirits that are in prison He went, *προευθεῖς*, and preached when they were disobedient in time past, what time the long-suffering of God was waiting in the days of Noah”—but with how little success! since the flesh then overpowered His Spirit, as He himself complained, “My *Spirit* shall not always strive with man, in that he also is *flesh*” (Gen. iv. 3), “few, that is eight souls” being all that He could prevail on to be “saved by water” sent to cleanse the old world.

*Now* (verse 21, 22) contrast the great quickening power procured by His death to Christ's Spirit, as imparted to the water of baptism (compared with the lustral water of the flood), “which [water], in its antitype baptism, is now saving you also [through the heightened power imparted to it] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is gone, *προευθεῖς*, into heaven and is on the right hand of God [endowed therefore with all power to save], angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.”\*

\* Compare (as indicating further the contrast between the influence of Christ's Spirit in verse 19, 20, and that in verse 21, 22), the corresponding words:—

1. *διεσώθησαν* *were saved*, verse 20, act past and finished—with *σώζει* *is saving*, verse 21, act present, going on continuously.

Ch. iv. 1, “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind, viz., to suffer, if need be, even unto death with Him who “is ready to judge the living and the dead,” verse 5. Fear not therefore the reproach of *the living* (your persecutors) who shall soon have to render account of themselves unto Christ. Fear not to be numbered with *the dead*: for, for this cause even to the dead [in the cause of Christ among your brethren] was the gospel preached, that they might be judged according to men *in the flesh*, but live according to God *in the Spirit*,” (verse 6.)

It is therefore to a *voluntary* dying in the flesh like Christ’s, that “a quickening,” or “living according to God in the spirit,” is promised; not to *the dead in Hades*. “The dead” in chap. iv. 6, consequently, cannot denote those who were dead already, previously to the coming of Christ, otherwise the parallel is made void, and the Apostle’s exhortation, founded on the example of Christ, divested of meaning. Those that are already dead have no “flesh in which they could be judged according to men,” and be put to death in the flesh”; and since the being quickened and “living according to God in the spirit” is dependent on their arming themselves with the same mind as Christ to *suffer in the flesh*, common sense decides that those here intended cannot have been *already dead* at the time when the gospel was preached to them.

St. Peter’s argument therefore appears to be:—“You have a double motive not to fear suffering voluntarily unto death in the flesh. The Spirit acquired by Christ is now more powerful than formerly to save: and the example of Christ instructs you in the blessed effects to your own spirits of such suffering.”

2. *ποτε in time past*, verse 19—with *νῦν now*, verse 21.

3. • *πορευθεὶς having gone*, verse 19—with *πορευθεὶς*, verse 22. On the first occasion Christ went but found almost all *disobedient* to Him, and now therefore “spirits in the *prison*”—of Hades; on the latter, He went to *heaven*, and found all *obedient*, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him.”







